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PARTISAN REVIEW / 1

**Writers in Exile III:
A Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents**

William Phillips
Our Country and Our Culture

Manès Sperber
Reminiscences

Diana Pinto
Is There Hope in Economic Stagnation?

Herbert Ferber
The Rothko Case

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Poetry
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A. Leyeles
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Reviews
D. S. Carne-Ross
Anthony Giddens
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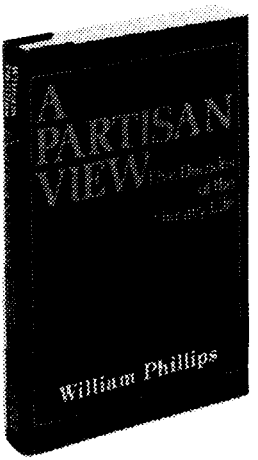

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COMMENT

OUR COUNTRY AND OUR CULTURE. The title of a rather well known and influential symposium, *Our Country and Our Culture,* that was published in 1952 in *Partisan Review,* was appropriated by a neoconservative symposium last year at the Plaza. It was a weighty ideological affair, keynoted by Hilton Kramer.

Unfortunately, the line laid down by Kramer twisted the meaning of the original symposium to fit his new ideology, which, among other false claims and misstatements, assumes that all roads lead to neoconservatism. Kramer's tone is also quite abusive. This is not surprising, as Kramer has become known for his low polemical tactics, featuring ugly personal attacks, so reminiscent of Stalinist arguments, which threaten to destroy civilized intellectual exchange in this country. So dedicated has Kramer become to the task of annihilating everyone an inch to the left of him, that he has almost succeeded in making neoconservatism implausible and unrespectable.

Kramer's argument defies summarizing, for it is an ensemble of clichés, contradictions, and pompous cultural exhortations. He insists that the original statement did not go far enough in the direction of neoconservatism, and that whatever was of value in it, which he construes as a manifesto to end critical non-conformism in American culture, is being violated by our delinquent writers today. According to Kramer, both the 1952 editorial statement and the comments on it by a number of literary figures failed to celebrate the growth of culture and the arts in this country. Kramer recites the typical litany of praise by the boosters of the cultural marketplace, that elevates quantity over quality, by reminding us that book sales are up, museums are packed, the ballet is thriving, grants by government and private foundations are swelling, and so on. At the same time, Kramer takes his stand, somewhat pompously and shrilly, for high critical standards and discriminations, which would seem to contradict his satisfaction with the popular spread of culture. With the help of his new ideology, however, he solves the contradiction by claiming it is the left that is responsible for the lowering of standards.

Ideology also invents its own history. Thus Kramer misrepresents the 1952 statement—written by Delmore Schwartz and myself—and ignores the political situation giving the symposium its significance at the time. From the thirties to the fifties Marxism

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gradually had been losing its hold on serious intellectuals, even on left anticommunists, though there were some residues. It was becoming clear that the international rhetoric of Marxism was blinding us to political and esthetic realities. To serve some abstract notion of humanity meant to blur the fact that America, with all its shortcomings, still represented the possibility of a free and democratic life. The vulgar Marxism of the period also magnified and transformed into an absolute the critical strain native to the American tradition. And the emphasis on an international perspective in all matters tended to obscure the fact that art—and especially literature—came out of a specific experience and that it was uniquely national as well as broadly human. It was time to reconsider our relation to our country and our culture.

This did not mean somersaulting into some conservative or chauvinist posture. What we said was:

> The affirmative attitude toward America which has emerged since the Second World War may be a necessary corrective of the earlier extreme negation, but the affirmation cannot be equivocal. For American political and economic institutions have not suddenly become ideally beneficent, and many intellectuals are not prepared to give up all criticism of them.

The statement further pointed to the dilemma—a dilemma ignored by Kramer, presumably for ideological reasons—created by the fact that mass culture thrives in modern political democracy. "Political democracy," the statement said,

> "seems to coexist with the domination of the 'masses.' Whatever the cultural consequences might be, the democratic values which America either embodies or promises are necessary conditions for civilization and represent the only immediate alternative so long as Russian totalitarianism threatens world domination. Nevertheless there are serious cultural consequences: mass culture not only weakens the position of the artist and the intellectual by separating him from his natural audience, but it also removes the mass of people from the kind of art which might express their human and esthetic needs. Its tendency is to exclude everything which does not conform to popular norms; it creates and satisfies artificial appetites in the entire population; it has grown into a major industry which converts culture into a commodity."

Now regardless of whether this description of the political and

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cultural situation was accurate then, or now—and the whole question of mass culture has been debated and redefined endlessly—it does suggest the complexity of the problem: a complexity that Kramer reduces to its most banal formulations.

But Kramer has tried to have it both ways throughout his shifting career. Earlier he wavered between modernism and antimodernism. At the beginning of the abstract expressionist movement, he opposed it on the leftist grounds that it reflected the growth of American imperialism, though it might not have satisfied his taste for pictures in a more naturalist vein. Later he accepted some of the new figures, but generally favored the more representational painters, characteristically unaware that the realist tradition to which he is naturally drawn is associated with certain social and leftist trends that he abhors. To what extent this contradiction comes from esthetic indecisiveness or the conflict between his taste and his ideology, I would not venture to speculate about. The fact is that his writings on art have not had the influence that Clement Greenberg, for example, has had; and on *The New York Times* he actually played the role of a crusading cultural journalist more than an art critic. But the effect of his recently acquired ideology is clear enough. It leads him to dismiss what he thinks is radical or advanced, and to denigrate those who do not share his political and artistic prejudices—including most liberals. It also blinds him to the fact that the lowering of standards and the coopting of the avant-garde by the culture of the media are rooted, as Daniel Bell has pointed out, in the contradictions of modern society and not in some radical conspiracy.

The other contributors to the neoconservative version of our country and our culture lack Kramer's killer instinct, though many of them follow the line of the movement. Some make sense in their criticism of our intellectual decline and of the radical nonsense rampant these days. But generally their ideology keeps them from realizing that the political and cultural malaise they deplore is a product of the society they accept so uncritically. It is one thing to reject the anti-American carping at our country and our culture; it is quite another to celebrate their shortcomings.

Robert Nisbet and Gertrude Himmelfarb, for example, are quite right in pointing to the dismal intellectual state of the universities. And part of this is due to the mindless reduction of all questions by leftist professors to semi-Marxist formulations about peace, the third world, capitalist justice, etc. But this is not the whole story.

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It leaves out the levelling effects of mass education and anti-elitist agitation, the stifling effects of super-specialization, and of the emphasis on practical benefits in the curriculum and the classroom. It also does not take account of the fact that so many professors, who lack ideas of their own, are susceptible to every new intellectual fad. In the universities, at least, the left does not have a monopoly on bandwagon thinking.

Joseph Epstein's contribution was to rebuke such novelists as Doctorow and Coover for writing political tracts. This is legitimate criticism. And Epstein recognizes that one cannot will a change in the literary scene. But then he goes on, as do many of the other participants, at least to imply that neoconservative criticism can clean *up the culture*.

One of the more sensible and quietly argued pieces is Irving Kristol's. He is certainly right in his description of the mindless media. But it is an exaggeration to blame it on the "adversary culture." Most of the mindlessness is due to the insatiable quest for novelty to reach new and larger audiences; much of it is due to the endless talk shows and political discussions that sensationalize and grind every question into a meaningless pap. Some does come from the new wave of radicalism that has invaded the universities and the media. But this has to be seen as a perverted ideology taking the place of the traditional left. No longer communist, but without a mind of its own, this ideology which is left only by default fills the political vacuum by echoing currently fashionable pacifist and third world propaganda.

The best comments were made by Peter Berger, who tried to separate himself from ideological crusades. He acknowledged the decline of intellectual life in the academy, as most of us do who are not rationalizing our predicaments. However, his answer was not to promote neoconservative theories, but to emphasize the value of free inquiry, particularly by setting an example in one's own writing and teaching. If the peace movement, for example, has swept the universities, it is because neither students nor professors have been trained to examine ideas and movements critically. Hence they are not aware that a cause is not the same thing as an idea.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from the tendency of the conference to ascribe the problems of democratic capitalism to the "adversary culture," it is that ideology is not a substitute for history.

W.P.

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WRITERS IN EXILE III:

A Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: I want to welcome you to this Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents. Also, I want to thank Al Landa, vice president of the New School for Social Research for his help. Congressman Bill Green is here to welcome you and to make a few remarks.

CONGRESSMAN GREEN: I'm very much honored to be able to welcome this extraordinary group of scholars from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to New York City and to the New School. I can't think of a more fitting place in the country to hold today's session than here at the New School, with its history as a haven for refugee scholars from Europe at the time of Hitler and Nazi Germany. Your presence today is very much in keeping with the traditions of this institution. . . .

I should like to put to you the question of what the nature of intercourse should be between the United States—and perhaps its NATO allies—and the Soviet bloc. . . . It can involve discussions and possibly agreements as to armament levels, issues relating to trade, cultural and scientific exchanges and relationships.

I believe there are, or should be, certain overall American objectives. . . . Our first objective . . . is to preserve the freedom that we have here in this country. Next, we would want to preserve the freedom that is to be found in other countries. And finally, though it has been rather difficult to articulate and put into practice . . . we would seek ultimately that there be freedom in places where it now does not exist.

I do not expect that this group of visitors can offer us great expertise in terms of nuclear armaments or international finance; but certainly I know of no other group that can tell us more about cul-

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Editor's Note: This part of Writers in Exile: A Conference of Soviet and East European Dissidents was held on May 9, 1982, at The New School for Social Research. It was made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by the contributions of several private donors. Earlier sessions of the conference were published in previous issues of *Partisan Review*. The Russian texts were translated by John Glad, Director, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars. Edith Kurzweil was responsible for the organization of the conference.

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tural relationships and the nature of the cultural situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I think, therefore, that we can properly turn to this group for advice on the larger question of relationships with the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, and particularly on the question of whether cultural and scientific relationships are or are not a useful step. . . .

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Our dissidents are divided, some sitting up here and some sitting down in the first or second rows. Those up here will be speaking this morning and those down there will be speaking this afternoon. But together they represent a very large and important part of Russian and East European culture. This is a strange phenomenon, and I suppose it's only the second time in history that this has happened. The first time, of course, was the coming of exiles from Nazi Germany.

In Boston, each of the dissidents delivered a short paper. Some of us felt that there were a number of very important questions that were left unanswered. Hence, we will ask the dissidents some questions at this session. What are the different positions and groupings among the exiles from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and what do you agree and disagree about?

BORIS SHRAGIN: After our emigration began in the first half of the 1970s, there developed some divergent and even hostile tendencies in our dissident movement, in the Soviet Union and also abroad, which stemmed from absolutely different views about the development of our country.

One of these tendencies is very eloquently expressed by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. He is a Russian nationalist, an orthodox, religious believer in Eastern Christianity, Byzantium Christianity. This tendency would like Russia to return to its pre-Revolution state, when it was an orthodox religious, Christian monarchy. The most important difference between those people and us is the denial of democracy. They think that democracy is not perfect; that it is a disorder without unity. Nobody knows what is real truth, inner honor, real justice. That is why they believe in Russia, given our Russian tradition, that we need an authoritarian government in Russia.

Another tendency is democratic, though some are more liberal, some less liberal, and some social democrats. This tendency also is connected with the human rights movement in our country, which tries to defend freedom of speech, freedom of assembly—all political liberties.

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YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: I am just as close to the principle of human rights as to the appeals of Solzhenitsyn to live spiritually. I don't think that the gap between the two world views is so tragic and so real. Both of them, democracy and so-called autocracy—moreover all these terms are approximate—are struggling for the same thing: the dignity of human existence and its protection against the encroachment of a heartless power.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: We should also hear from those from East European countries.

JAN KOTT: I was in Poland during the coup, at the last Congress of Polish Culture, the first independent congress organized by the Solidarity unions. This was my third visit back. The country looked desperate; people were standing in long lines for everything—for just a piece of bread. But it was the country of paradise, of human happiness. Never before had I felt (I left Poland sixteen years ago) this deep human relationship, this vision of the great hope, this kind of enthusiasm for the future, the human future. Its independence was very close to the Yalta agreement.

The great Polish poet, the Nobel Prize winner Czeslaw Milosz, wrote after a coup that the greatest crime is to kill hope. And finally, this was the greatest crime that was committed in Poland. They killed not only a hope for all of us Poles, but also for Czechs, for Hungarians, for Russians too—the hope that every movement for some kind of decent liberalization will not finish with a brutal crackdown.

In some way Solidarity is different. If only the Russians could wave the flag of Solidarity! In some way Solidarity is also for the escapees and the émigrés from the southern and the Asian countries. With the movement of this new emigration, we have a kind of international Solidarity. It is a statement that life as a human being is worth a coup, worth working toward a state that will let you organize your own life.

In this country which has been a haven for almost two hundred years for so many émigrés from all over the world, the Solidarity movement is now also in some way a hope for the Americas, a hope that the future can be realized, that it can be realized by *us,* if not this year, then next year.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Do you think that nationalism is a conservative force that enables the Soviet regime to keep its hold on the population, or is nationalism a force for change in the Soviet Union, as it is in the East European countries?

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ANDREI SINIAVSKI: Nationalism can vary, and in different historical epochs it plays various roles. At times the nationalism of small and oppressed peoples is a great thing. At the same time, the nationalism of large and strong nations is a horror. I myself am Orthodox, but I am afraid of Russian nationalism, because it can turn into anything. It is a danger because Marxism is finished in Russia; yet Russians must live by some idea—a great or a maximal idea. Nationalism is growing stronger both inside Russia and even among some of the dissidents. Here there are also various shades of nationalism, from the liberal to the fascist. I belong to the so-called liberal-democratic trend among the dissidents.

Perhaps democracy will never win out in Russia. But the duty of the Russian intelligentsia is to be democratic, simply for the reason that without freedom, culture cannot exist. Though there may not be freedom in life, at least in art freedom will remain.

VASSILY AKSYONOV: Nationalism is a somewhat more natural feeling for a human being than are communist, totalitarian feelings. Probably we writers have to encourage some liberal tendencies in the Russian nationalist movement. I'm a cosmopolitan man, but if we dream of the future for Russia, the cosmopolitan dreams are groundless. Nationalism, in its liberal vein, is probably the most serious rival for the totalitarian idea in Russia nowadays.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: If I understood Siniavski, he said there was little or no hope for a democratic society in Russia? Is that correct?

ANDREI SINIAVSKI: Yes. But there are other hopes—for the existence of opposition. And it is among the intelligentsia that culture exists, despite the absence of democracy.

BORIS SHRAGIN: Disagreement exists even here among us. As a democrat and a liberal democrat, I believe that this is good, because most of the time we didn't really have a political life in our country. And the different ideas might be the beginning of political tendencies, even of future parties. Now we share a common enemy, the Soviet totalitarian regime, which gives us some common background for our positions. And whether democracy or authoritarianism will win out is the problem of the political development of our country.

PAVEL LITVINOV: Nobody knows the future, and it's very difficult to predict what's going to happen in Russia and throughout the world. True, recent developments are fine and unexpected. But I want to talk about the question of democracy in Russia from a broader perspective.

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More than one hundred years ago a great Russian writer and revolutionary, Aleksandr Herzen, said, "How sad and tragic the Russian life! But, there is hope, because each time autocracy becomes lighter, as after the death of Nicholas IV, something new immediately appears—new social, political, and literary forces. And each time new people are produced by Russia." We have to remember, since the death of Stalin—it's been less than thirty years—how much has changed. Nobody could have predicted that after Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress speech, there would be some kind of literary renaissance, and some hope for political development. Not much happened, but some books *were* published. *Samizdat* was born. Many writers, after Siniavski, started to publish their books abroad, and those books returned to Russia in printed form. The Soviet government was forced for a while to stop jamming the Voice of America, and many people learned a lot of things about the world. Then, after Khrushchev was ousted, there developed a certain literary movement. True, most activists of this movement sooner or later were arrested or forced to emigrate, and the fate of those people has been harsh. But it happened. Such writers as Solzhenitsyn appeared, and Andrei Sakharov, maybe one of the greatest spokesmen for peace and humanity in today's world.

People started to talk. In 1968, I remember, we thought that the Soviets might permit emigration. By now, a quarter of a million Soviet people, most but not all Jews (and this isn't the most important thing), have left the Soviet Union. Emigration has to some degree become a reality. Though activists fighting for emigration, like Scharansky, who is now in jail, are in great trouble, those who are here were not strangled in labor camps. Our movement for human rights, our speaking up, and our books made this discussion possible. In the Soviet Union there is no such people's movement, but our movement created at least some basis upon which a discussion about the future of Russia became possible.

YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: In a certain sense history does not exist at all, because Bolshevism throws man and human culture so far back in time that it is entirely justifiable to speak of the total degradation of personality under victorious Bolshevism. Nationalism has arisen as a phenomenon under conditions of totalitarian power. Thus it must be viewed as a sign of recovery. In other words, the nation must begin its dance all over again. Of course it can dance its way to fascism. All of us—the Russians and Jews and Poles and Czechs—we

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all must support the benign development of nationalism, especially in culture, which Andrei Siniavski has spoken about, and also in politics and morals. Therefore, a clearly negative attitude toward the healthy phenomena of nationalism is not tactful, not strategic; it alienates us from the desired goal, from the restoration of democracy and normal conditions of existence in Russia and in all the countries under its enslavement.

ANDREI SINIAVSKI: I disagree wholeheartedly with my friend Aleshkovsky. There are situations when a nation's recovery begins with nationalism, but in Russia, in my view, such a situation does not exist. We knew the Russian nationalism of Stalin's time. This grimace of present Soviet-Russian nationalism is not recovery; it is a new illness, just like Communism.

SERGEI DOVLATOV: When Aksyonov says that nationalists and human rights defenders have one enemy—totalitarianism, communism—he forgets that both Pushkin and Lenin also had one enemy—autocracy. But Lenin's ideas triumphed, and this led to many unfortunate results. Aleshkovsky says that both nationalists and human rights defenders are working to achieve the same thing—human dignity, a tolerable existence; but both Lenin and Trotsky, and their supporters, were ready at any moment to give up their lives for just these ideas, for a worthy human existence. We all know what that led to.

If one is to speak of, let's say, the writer Siniavski as a prominent representative of the democratic tendency, and of Maximov, the editor of *Kontinent,* as a representative of the opposite tendency, then the difference between them is not whether one of them writes better or worse than the other. And it is not that one of them is more reserved and quieter, and the other tougher, stronger, and more energetic; or even—which is very important—that if Maximov, let's say, had attained some literary power, then Siniavski's journal *Syntaxis* would be immediately closed down, while if Siniavski had attained power, the journal *Kontinent* would continue to exist. It is more important that if the democrat Siniavski came to power in a democratic society, he would not have the means to close down *Kontinent.* He would not possess such rights.

With all my respect for Siniavski, I consider democratic forms of existence the most acceptable for myself, because I would not want to be dependent upon any possible fluctuations in his consciousness. The only normal society is one in which the literary, cultural, and

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political life have been built upon a lawful foundation.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: I gather from most of the dissidents that nobody believes in Communism in the Soviet Union. Are there any dissidents or people within the Soviet Union and the satellite countries who believe in democratic socialism as distinguished from Communism? Or do they all tend to believe that the only viable alternative to totalitarian Communism is some kind of Western democratic capitalist regime?

BORIS SHRAGIN: In official propaganda one of the main ideas has been that Communism is the only real form of socialism. This idea runs very deep in the Soviet consciousness, and this is why dissidents — as well as nondissidents — identify Communism and socialism as similar. It is interesting and rather sad that our émigrés in New York are very scared, for instance, of becoming members of American trade unions, because they believe that any labor movement is connected with Communists. Some politically better educated people in the Soviet Union know that in Russia there were not only Communist Bolsheviks, but also Mensheviks, who were social democrats and had no inclination toward violence. Some present forms of economic and social life will be continued in the future, and that is why a socialist democratic tendency has its reason and roots in the current situation in the Soviet Union.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Do any of the dissidents believe that there is anything in Marx or Lenin worth preserving?

PAVEL LITVINOV: An important confusion exists. Basically there are two things in today's world — democracy and totalitarianism. But the more we use words like "social democracy" and "democratic socialism" — some Americans use the expression "industrial democracy" — the more confused I become. With democracy, things can change slowly or quickly. Democratic capitalism has existed always in America, though it's been different in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Starting in the 1920s and 1930s from the time of Roosevelt, America went in a kind of socialist direction — in developments like welfare, employment, social security. Today, some attempts are being made to return to a certain "bureaucratism" without necessarily destroying the so-called safety net for all people.

We can imagine what would happen in the Soviet Union if the government's grasp on economic power were loosened. Let's imagine a democratic Russia in the future: if people tried to vote on issues relating to a free market economy or some kind of mixed economy,

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there would be an enormous number of people with vested interests who would like to hold on to certain things. That's normal, and that's what democracy is. I think that in today's Soviet Union there is only one thing that is real: the fight for democracy. This has to be made very clear, because when people in the Soviet Union discuss these things, they often don't talk about the practical means of doing this. They don't say: "Okay, if we come to power, we will have a pure capitalist market, or we'll have a social democracy." They think about what they *could* achieve. There were attempts in the Soviet Union to create an independent labor movement, for example, even before Solidarity in Poland. Most of those people are in labor camps or mental hospitals, and others can't at the moment speak their minds, although some information does get out. But such people don't talk in these categories; these are categories acquired by émigrés to the West who start to think in the terms of the societies in which they now live.

In Boston the day before yesterday, somebody asked us if it were true that there is an independent peace movement in the Soviet Union, and they mentioned some group in Cleveland that has corresponded with a group in the Soviet Union, presumably, for peace and for freezing nuclear weapons. For almost anybody from the Soviet Union, this question is ridiculous because no influential peace movement can exist openly in the Soviet Union for very long. You don't have to be an émigré or a dissident to know this: everybody knows that such a group, if it appeared, would immediately be strangled. But when we come to this country we have to explain and answer such questions, because, for some absurd reason, people *don't* know. Sometimes when we answer such questions we become angry, because we figure that they don't *want* to know. Americans will never understand, and probably the Communists will come and take over soon, because they don't understand that they're actually strangling their *own* government and that their influence on the Soviet government is nil.

As for whether anything in Marx and Lenin is worth preserving, as I've already explained, this question is not necessarily worth answering directly. But one thing is important: anything that was good in Marxism and Leninism, in my opinion, and was worth preserving, was said before Marx and Lenin. It was a part of the humane development of people. Those things are worth preserving. But any contribution that Lenin himself made and did not acquire from elsewhere, is not worth preserving.

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WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Do any of our other speakers feel that anything in Marxism or Leninism is worth preserving?
YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: I think two things should be preserved from Marxism-Leninism—Marx's grave at the Highgate cemetery and, perhaps, the mausoleum, as an example of absurd architectural structure.
VASSILY AKSYONOV: And what about Engel's grave? That's the whole ocean, since his ashes have been scattered. We have to keep the ocean.
YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: But in the end, the Soviet regime may become so powerful that it could extract the ashes from the ocean. But none of this is serious. I'll try instead to answer the question of whether an antiwar movement exists in Russia. Pavel Litvinov has already said that one does not and cannot exist, because in Russia the people's will is entirely subordinate to the tendencies of the State, of the authorities. They would be called either imperialists or hegemonists.
WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Is there any kind of antiwar or peace tendency?
YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: No, this cannot be permitted by the authorities, because it would inevitably get out of control, and it would be connected to criticism of the authorities themselves, of the nature of arms build-up, and of the overall policy goals. But, of course, we and the American propaganda machine (we shall call it that) must support in every way the peoples enslaved by totalitarianism in their attempts to arouse consciousness, in their political activity.
JOHN GLAD: There are two questions from the audience. Why would *Partisan Review*—which is a magazine of somewhat liberal views—support a meeting of dissident writers? The second question is, were Solzhenitsyn, Brodsky, and Maximov invited to the meeting?
WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Maximov, Solzhenitsyn, and Brodsky were invited, but they couldn't attend. Brodsky was a member of the sponsoring committee for this conference.

The first question sounds almost unanswerable, because its very assumption is something that we reject—the assumption that someone with views that tend toward liberalism or the Left should not be supporting the fight for freedom, not only of the dissidents but of the populations in countries that live in totalitarian regimes. I don't see any contradiction. What has happened, unfortunately, is that the word "left" has become confused with all kinds of false and fashionable notions and interests that have nothing to do with either

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socialism or democracy. I don't want to go into that now, because I think we want to hear from the dissidents rather than to hear a defense of an action that does not require any defense.

VASSILY AKSYONOV: I'd like to add that those who oppose us are neither right, nor left, nor center.

WOMAN FROM AUDIENCE: The question about the possibility of a peace movement in the Soviet Union was put in the wrong way. Why should they demonstrate for peace and against war when for sixty years they've been told that their government wants nothing *but* peace? Of course, this was nothing but a cover for the Soviet government to conduct almost continuous diversions and international terrorism and expansionism. So it's one big lie that they've been putting out for all these years, and it seems that they have been successful, especially if people in America can believe that such a movement would be allowed in the Soviet Union. Of course they want peace, but they want peace *on their own terms!*

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: What do the dissidents, individually or collectively, think of American foreign policy—assuming there is one—and what do they think America should be doing that it isn't doing?

PAVEL LITVINOV: American policy toward the Soviet Union has to be consistent and shouldn't change with changes of administration. It is most important that the Soviets get the right message from a strong and consistent American government; and American policy has to be strong—Americans have to be strong—in order to stop the progress of Soviet expansion. This is the only way it will be arrested. Also, since President Carter started to stress human rights in American foreign policy, I hope all later presidents, regardless of party, will take the same position. This is important for the people of the Soviet Union, who, rightly or wrongly, have an image of America as the leader of the free world, and of the American president as the spokesman for the free world. If the Soviet people know that America cares about what's going on with them, this can make a difference. It can boost the morale of people in labor camps and mental hospitals; they would know that there are some people who are not allies of their hangmen.

But it also is important for Americans. Very often in this country I hear people say "We Americans have a good life, we have houses, and automobiles, and televisions—we don't want to change that! But at least Russian people have some ideas. Americans don't." I've heard that so many times, it irritates me, because America has

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its own great ideas—the American Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the principles of democracy and the American republic; and Americans have to be reminded that there are people in the world who are deprived of all this. America has to be proud of these ideas, and it has to spread them to the rest of the world, because the Soviet Union always broadcasts its own message: that it is Marxist-Leninist, with the most progressive ideology in the world.

SERGEI DOVLATOV: Even questions of literature seem to me totally insoluble, and I can say nothing definite about politics. I feel that the tendency of trying to attack Communism by any means is extremely dangerous. It's unimportant what the weapon will be—nationalism, an intensification of propaganda, or the use of arms. Such a tendency is called unscrupulousness and hides behind a fascist thesis: that the end justifies the means, which results in a bond between the end and the means.

I am convinced that if it were possible to take a survey of Russian emigrants, a significant portion, perhaps even a majority, would speak out for the immediate use of nuclear weapons against the Communists. Almost all the Americans with whom we come into contact seem to us Russians to be leftists, precisely because we ourselves are so far to the right that no one can be further right than us. My own position, however, is that I could live comfortably in a state based on lawful and constitutional grounds.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: If I understood or heard Mr. Dovlatov correctly, he said that *we* are all on the right. Who're the "we"? Are all the dissidents on the right, and what does he mean by "right"? I think people like Mr. Dovlatov should learn to dissociate themselves from a good part of conservative America, partly because that part of conservative America represents ideals and interests with which none of us can be in sympathy. In addition, there's a great myth in this country that all conservatives and all big business are anti-Communist. Mr. Aleshkovsky.

YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: I think that Sergei Dovlatov wants to impress us not so much with his liberalism as with *abstract* liberalism. By the way, none of us here has called for unscrupulousness in the battle against Communism, nor was there any mention of a nuclear preventive attack on the Soviet Union. Why conduct a discussion with premises known to be false? What do I think of American politics? I can't offer any recipes to Alexander Haig, whom I personally like very much—I think he's a goodlooking man. In my opinion, his

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many-hours-long discussions with Andrei Gromyko ended unsuccessfully because Gromyko clearly looks unattractive in the society of the elegant Haig. Still, I believe and hope that there is a chance for success.

This conference was not organized just so we could jabber, argue with one another and stir up the audience. We shouldn't squander this opportunity to carry certain of our soundest and most intelligent ideas to the people who determine American politics and direct the propaganda machine. I say these words with disgust, but what others are there, strictly speaking? If people correctly understand our concern over the confrontation of the two superpowers, which at any moment could lead the whole world to totally irreparable cataclysm, then this will be marvelous.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Mr. Siniavski.

ANDREI SINIAVSKI: I think Dovlatov was right in saying that all the means do not justify the end. I had the opportunity of talking with a certain very distinguished, intelligent and cultured Sovietologist, and I asked why Americans who, after all, are democrats and liberals in their ideas, generally support nationalistic circles of the Russian dissident movement; and he calmly replied (maybe he was speaking for himself in the given situation), "You see, nationalism is a real force that can oppose Communism." I asked him, "But aren't you afraid that real nationalism in Russia may be, well, just fascism?" And he answered, "No, why? That would be very good." So I asked him, "Why good? After all, that would be the end of Russian culture." He said calmly, "But we're not concerned about Russian culture, we're worried about our security." I'm against such a policy.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Thank you.

WOMAN FROM THE AUDIENCE: I think it's certainly true that any peace movement in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe would be viewed as subversive, just as it is here; but the governments there have more ways to stop or repress it. So, I think the question is, what is the way to stimulate a peace movement in the East, if you think that's possible? There is one growing up in East Germany. It seems to me that what made it happen was the emergence of an independent peace movement in the West. Another suggestion of the way to build peace is to build American and Western weapons. Now, I think that's counterproductive if you want to stimulate a movement from below in the East.

What are the real ideas that America defends in the world? It

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doesn't defend democracy—not because it isn't articulate, but because it has a stake in dictatorships. So rather than link yourself to the American propaganda machine, you have to be against the American military establishment and for a democratic foreign policy.

BORIS SHRAGIN: Theoretically speaking, I agree that it would be very good if, in Eastern Europe and especially the Soviet Union, there were a massive, real, independent movement for peace. As a matter of fact—and this is very interesting—in Eastern Germany there has been much information about such a movement. But unfortunately, I don't believe this is the case in the Soviet Union. You have to remember that in the Soviet Union we haven't had any independent movement; and people are very skeptical and scared about such mass actions, even peaceful ones. Along with Russian nationalism, there developed a certain xenophobia toward the West—the belief that Western society is spoiled with pornography, crime, disorder, with dangers we have to stay away from. They believe that the West is provocative in terms of nuclear war and other forms of violence. Such things are expressed unfortunately, not only in Soviet propaganda, but also by some of our fellow dissidents in their publications abroad. Because of this image of the Western world, people are scared. And this is why nationalism, Russian nationalism especially, is connected with some feelings among the Soviet people that they are in danger and are supposed to be strong. So, to them, ideas about peace that come from the West look very perverse.

JAN KOTT: One of the Polish writers who is now in exile wrote about the slogan of the peace movement in Western Germany and France, "Better red than dead." Well, this Polish writer wrote: "'Better red than dead!' said the lobster, and so they put him in hot water!"

MAN FROM AUDIENCE: Could the panelists please comment on the trip by the Reverend Billy Graham to Moscow, and on the reasons why the Soviet authorities invited him?

PAVEL LITVINOV: They invited him because they wanted to be friendly with groups they could consider at that political moment, as convenient on one side and not dangerous on the other. They think that if they can control the purely religious influence of Billy Graham it won't become dangerous. Then, too, they want to have friends among the peaceniks in this country. And, as I understand it, they got a very important promise from Billy Graham: that he won't speak up for persecuted Christians and other religious groups in the Soviet Union. There are a group of Pentacostalists in the American

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embassy representing hundreds of thousands of Russian Pentacostalists who suffer, who cannot have their own prayer houses, who cannot meet and pray together; and there are other religious groups like Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, and hundreds of thousands if not millions of others, including Russian orthodox believers. The Soviets would have shown him Baptist and Russian Orthodox churches and their leaders, who no doubt told Billy Graham that everything is all right—they have beautiful churches, icons, services, and so on. They found a man who is sincere and very naive, and they thought they could probably use him for their propaganda.

I have noticed in my travels around the United States that American Jews, for example, are very active in their support of Soviet Jews; but American Baptists, who are much more numerous, don't care. And their attitude, even when they call themselves anti-Communist, has to do with not making waves, not talking about human rights. They're not the same as the American Jews who have a long history of persecution. The Soviets invited Billy Graham purely for propaganda purposes.

MAN FROM AUDIENCE: My program says "Writers in Exile," and so far the only thing you've mentioned about writers in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc is your comment that there is no literature other than that which is in exile. I think that's a statement somewhat akin to saying that there is no American literature other than that of the beatniks or the moderns. All you've done has been to use these gentlemen, whom you repeatedly refer to as "dissidents"—though I'm not certain they'd all want to be branded as such—to spout your own politics.

I recently read a collection of works by the Yugoslav author Mahlovan Djilas, who has the double distinction of having been jailed as both a Communist and an anti-Communist. In the final analysis, though, he's still a crummy writer. Could you perhaps give these gentlemen a chance to talk about their work?

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: That's your own opinion about Djilas. Aksyonov?

VASSILY AKSYONOV: Well, here we use the word "dissident" as if it were some kind of occupation. I'm not much of a politician, you know, and I would prefer to talk about literature.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS. He's saying that we have no right to say that much of Russian literature and culture—to leave out the Eastern bloc countries for a moment—exists outside the Soviet Union, or underground in *samizdat.*

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BORIS SHRAGIN: On this point I do not agree with our chairman, and I think my position is probably that of all the panelists. Some of our colleagues here—for instance, Voinovich, or Aksyonov, or Nekrassov, or even Siniavski—belonged in the past to the literary world of the Soviet Union. It would not be fair, nor would it be good, I think, to divide us by where we live because there is only a totality of Russian culture; and it continues to exist under very hard conditions, under oppression; but it continues to exist in the Soviet Union. Maybe sometimes some voices—not so loud, maybe, not so open, but still voices inside the country—are even much more important than our voices from abroad. You have to remember that emigration has one important drawback: we are separated from our country, and time is slipping away. Our Russia, our homeland, as time goes on, becomes something in our memory only. It is impossible for us to represent or express some tendencies, some problems, some conflicts that are developing now or might develop in the future of the Soviet Union.

VASSILY AKSYONOV: Let me say a few words about these two literatures. A year ago we had a conference in Los Angeles on the subject of how many Russian literatures exist nowadays: two or one, or three? I would say there is only one Russian literature, which exists both abroad and at home. But it seems to me that there are, side by side, Russian literature and a paraliterature, that is, a substitute for literature, a false surrogate of literature. The Soviet authorities are trying to create, to develop this sort of literature, and we have to learn to recognize the border between real literature and this paraliterature. This border is sometimes invisible, sometimes vague. From time to time it runs even inside a single book. Especially in Russia, you can find some very talented writers who are trying to create real literary works; but they waver from time to time.

WOMAN FROM AUDIENCE: I'd like to know if any of the panelists have comments about the importance or the unimportance for the future of the Soviet Union of nationalistic movements among the minority nationalities.

PAVEL LITVINOV: There are many, many minorities—among them very big minorities like the Ukrainians and smaller ones like the Lithuanians, and then even smaller ethnic groups, and groups with histories as separate states like Latvia and Estonia, and those who don't have a history like the Ukraine but who nevertheless always considered themselves separate and wanting to be independent. The movement for the independence of these countries developed

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with some official support; even the Soviet constitution recognizes the secession of all fifteen so-called major Soviet Republics. We could distinguish between two movements, movements for secession, and movements against Russification, which exist both among national and ethnic groups, and for which people are abused and sent to labor camps. Andrei Siniavski will probably confirm that there are more Ukrainians in the labor camps in the Soviet Union than there are people of any other nationality. This all indicates that there is a very strong Soviet imperialism. We should support these people, although such nationalism may bring about results we don't necessarily like, and even though such nationalism is not necessarily democratic.

BORIS SHRAGIN: I think that the Soviet empire, as all empires are supposed to do, will fall apart. It's especially important for the Russian people, the Russian nation, to make this happen in the least painful way. The only way to decide this problem is the democratic way, which is why the human rights movement supported any nationalities, any minorities who were oppressed and persecuted.

This problem of other nations and their independence has a very strict connection to Russian nationalism. Russian nationalists are divided. Solzhenitsyn, for instance, has said he wouldn't support imperialistic notions in Russian history or in the present. But there are various tendencies, which are strictly and openly imperialistic, both within the social official ideology and outside it.

It's a very strange fact that in the Lithuanian nationalist movement there are different groups; all of them are nationalists, but they cover the whole spectrum of political positions. Russian nationalism is connected only with authoritarian tendencies.

ANDREI SINIAVSKI: I've received a question: "In your view, have the literary process and the role of the writer in a totalitarian society changed?" Yes, I think they have changed and are continually changing, for two reasons: because society itself changes and develops, and because literature in and of itself changes and develops. The twenties, let's say, were a time of blossoming of Soviet literature. There was more freedom then; various groups and currents could exist, granted, standing on the platform of the Soviet regime, but with different nuances. Moreover, there were good writers supporting the Soviet regime—sometimes even such frenzied, pro-Communist writers as, for example, Mayakovsky, a brilliant poet. This is impossible now. Here they're asking: But what about Sholokhov?

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Well, Sholokhov, if it really was Sholokhov, wrote *The Quiet Don* under different circumstances. But as far as I know, Sholokhov has written nothing for the last thirty or forty years.

YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: No, he *did* write.

ANDREI SINIAVSKI: Well, if he did write anything, it was something very bad. The literary situation has changed a lot in post-Stalin times. It's a very diverse, complicated picture. But there are certain constants that have accompanied these changes—such circumstances, for example, as censorship and prison.

MAN FROM AUDIENCE: I'd like to make a very brief comment and then ask a question. My comment is this: I think that the gentlemen on this panel are people of extraordinary courage who expressed their opposition to a brutal regime and were prepared to risk the consequences, and I think they deserve a great deal of credit. I'd like to add, though, that I've been somewhat disappointed by the way in which they responded to the question on American foreign policy. St. Juste once said that no one can rule guiltlessly, and I think it was Solzhenitsyn who once said that every great writer living in a country is like a foreign power living in a country. I can't imagine why people who are sensitive to the concerns of humanity generally would hesitate to criticize, as one or two of the panelists in fact did, aspects of American foreign policy along with, I think, their very legitimate and justified, and much more far-reaching criticism of the Soviet Union and its policies. I hope that they realize that the effect of this is to undercut their own credibility. My question is this: can they tell us what impact their views have had—the various and divergent views—not only on intellectuals in the Soviet Union, but on the Soviet people? And what are the prospects for any kind of radical change, and the direction it's likely to take if there is a real prospect?

YUZ ALESHKOVSKY: Among the group of literary men participating in this meeting, there are writers whom I would call political writers. Also among us are lyricists and people drawn to other genres. The most important thing in our work is not what we say at meetings with writers, but what is in our books. Dovlatov was totally correct in saying that the most gratifying thing for us in our perhaps comfortable life in exile, but in exile all the same, is the fact that our books end up in Russia and are read until they fall to pieces. On the black market in Moscow one of my novels sells for two hundred roubles. They say the novels of Aksyonov are worth even more. It's impossible for us now to say what kind of influence our books have

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on the political and artistic consciousness of those living in Russia. On the whole I would not say, speaking only for myself, that my main creative impulse comes from the feeling of civic duty. But I am convinced that each of us is doing a noble deed. If Russia revives as a democratic state, we can boldly gather together, drink about three liters of vodka, and say that we also have contributed to this revival.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: A famous person who is in opposition to the Soviet regime has just come in, General Grigorenko. I would like to invite him to join us to later answer questions or make any statement he wishes.

We had planned to emphasize questions about literature and culture in this session, and that happens to coincide with the requests that many of you have made. If time permits, we may return to some political questions, because some people have indicated that we didn't exhaust those and they weren't satisfied with the answers.

Before we begin our formal questioning, I have an insistent note which says, "Many of us think we heard Mr. Dovlatov endorse the use of any means, including the ultimate ones, to destroy the present regime. Mr. Dovlatov says that he is opposed to nuclear warfare and did not say what most of the audience heard."

SERGEI DOVLATOV: There has been some misunderstanding. I was talking about the tendency to consider any means admissible in the battle against Communism as extremely dangerous. I spoke of unscrupulousness, which hides behind the old idea that the end justifies the means, which results in a bond between the end and the means. I also said, which for some reason aroused the indignation of my friend Aleshkovsky, that if a survey were to be taken of emigrants, and by this I mean not the dissidents sitting here in the auditorium, but the ordinary public, that some of them would speak out for the use of military means against the Soviet state, which would lead to monstrous consequences. I am not capable or prepared to give an evaluation of the foreign policy of the United States or any other state—but, in the most general sense, I can say that I think the most judicious policy is one that is supported by a constitutional statute and is realizable by taking into account to the greatest possible extent the expressed opinion of the majority of competent individuals.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Thank you. I'm pleased to announce that we are being joined by Mr. Valéry Chalidze, the Russian writer and editor, and by Mr. Mihajlo Mihajlov, the Yugoslav writer.

We will begin by asking the dissidents which contemporary

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writers most influenced their views of the West, both before and after they left the Soviet Union.

VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: One book is by Evgenia Semenovna Ginzburg. Her son, Vassily Aksyonov, is sitting in front of me. It has been many years since I have read a book with such truth, sincerity, and incredible goodness. It made a tremendous impression. Your mother preserved what should be the pride of every human being—goodness.

EFIM ETKIND: The book that has made the most powerful impression on me in the past several years is a novel by Vasilii Grossman, *Life and Fate.* This book, completed in the beginning of the 1960s, was confiscated by the KGB, and it turned out that not one copy was preserved, except for those that were in the safes of the KGB. Thanks to the sacrifices of our friends, the manuscript was extracted from the depths of the police files, microfilmed and sent to the West. I would like to say that this is a wise book. Grossman's main idea was to analyze the development of mass movements and the different forms of fascism, such as class fascism and racial fascism: he doesn't see any difference between these two curses of mankind. I think that every person who wants to understand genuinely and deeply the reality of the Soviet Union and how the Soviet Communist regime differs from and is similar to the Nazi regime should read this book. In it there are answers to many of the questions we have discussed, for example, the danger of nationalism, the democratic possibilities and perspectives in the development of the Soviet Union.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Does it exist only in Russian?

EFIM ETKIND: For the present only in Russian.

NAUM KORZHAVIN: I am impressed by a Russian book too. I am referring to a book by Petr Grigoryevich Grigorenko, who is present here, which is inaptly titled *In the Underground You Meet Only Rats.* This book is especially important today, when attempts are being made to substitute and replace history with the philosophy of history. It's important to know who created the Soviet regime and what it is. Here before us is Grigorenko, an honest man, honest not only today, but in his whole life. The friends who surround him in the book also are all good people.

The psychological history of our society is the main ingredient necessary for understanding Russia, and this is impossible today without an understanding of this book. It's possible to hate and to

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disclaim the system, but understanding is still more desirable. I believe that our psychological history has been recorded by a person who has come to a realization of himself and his life, a very intelligent and talented man, even when he served the Soviet regime.

VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: I would like to add three words to what Korzhavin has said about Grigorenko. There are people in the Soviet Union to whom Soviets have given everything: fame, wealth, peace, and happiness. Sakharov, awarded Hero of Socialist Labor three times, is one of these, and he could have done anything he wanted. But he chose another path, the most difficult in life. Petr Grigorenko was a famous general; he fought well and has medals that would cover his whole chest. Now he is deprived of all his titles; he's not even a soldier. He's simply no one, because he suddenly became concerned with the fate of the Crimean Tatars, and he gave them his entire life.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Are you familiar with the works of such American novelists as Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, William Styron, John Updike—just to mention a few? Are you familiar with American poetry?

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH: I don't think the Russian reader is familiar with such writers as Bellow or Mailer; they're not translated. He is more familiar with writers of the older generation: Hemingway, Faulkner, Salinger; and with those a little younger: Updike and, let's say, Albee. Aksyonov, for example, has translated Doctorow. I believe this was his last work in the Soviet Union. Old American literature is especially well known, like Mark Twain.

EFIM ETKIND: I would like to mention two or three authors. One is not an American but a British poet: Ted Hughes, who has left me with a deep impression. The other two are Americans: Kurt Vonnegut, who is read widely in the Soviet Union and well received by the Soviet leaders; and Robert Penn Warren, whose novel, *All the King's Men,* is a very important work, which impressed me and the hundreds of thousands of readers of the review *Novy Mir,* where it was published about seven or eight years ago.

NAUM KORZHAVIN: The literature of the Southern Renaissance has had the greatest influence on me, not in some dissident direction, but simply as literature, as an introduction to a certain world. First and foremost is Faulkner. Before Faulkner I loved Hemingway, but for some reason—though it's absolutely unnecessary that one writer cancel out the other—after Faulkner, Hemingway somehow

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became artificial, although I'm probably not being fair; also Carson McCullers. I think the Southern Renaissance is a revelation, because it's an approach to harmony after disharmony, to tragic harmony, to a harmonious sense of the world. The writer places himself somewhere next to God and is somehow resigned to the whole tragedy.
WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Can we hear from the non-Russians so that this doesn't become a purely Russian session?
ERAZIM KOHÁK: I was all set with a very clever answer about Western authors: I would have named all Czech authors, because they are all very much Western. One book that I would mention is by a philosopher named Jan Patoĉhka who was a student of Edmund Husserl. After the war, he continued to study philosophy. He signed the human rights declaration, was taken for interrogation, and was interrogated until he died. I think his small book, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History,* is extremely valuable, because it has a sense of the historic meaning of the West, of Europe, as a cultural reality.

The American authors we read, those who were translated, tended again to be of the older generation. I had an unfair advantage, since I could read English, so I'm not typical. What we tended to see in American literature was very much one side of our own heritage. If you take the sense of the European heritage to be the constant struggle between the affirmation of the sovereignty of individual conscience and the cohesion of a community—the constant tension between the liberty of the individual and the attempt to avoid anarchy—we saw in America and in American letters very much the affirmation of the irreducibility of the individual. We saw this in *Moby Dick.* And we also saw you coming to terms with the sense of human cohesion—in the authors who were writing during the economic crisis, in the translation of *Tortilla Flats.* (I've read this in English since, but I didn't think the English did justice to the Czech original!) What we saw here was a country where humans still have a certain unpretentious humanity.

The last thing that I will say is, I have read very little of recent American literature. I pick it up, I start reading it, and I put it down. Perhaps I'm getting too old. But what I'm seeing here is a people who are becoming more and more absorbed with their own psychology. An able fascination! I look at the incredibly Freudian novels that are now being written: no longer the kind of earthy, confident humanity that we saw in America, but rather a kind of problematic quest for identity. Of late, I am more and more turning to Czech literature

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with its recognition that, finally, self-discovery always has to be self-transcendence. One of my favorites is about to come out in English, a book by a friend of mine named Jiri Grusa, called *The Questionnaire.*

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH: My stay here has somehow had an effect on me, but how, I still don't know myself. For example, a terrible thing has happened to me here: in Russia I usually wrote one book without being distracted, but here I'm writing simultaneously — I'm afraid to even say now — about ten books. I begin, write, write, and then I think, "I'd be better writing this other book." I made a lot of shelves at home, and on each shelf I put an unfinished, or, let's say, an only just begun manuscript. I think that in part this may be the result of some sort of subconscious liberation. I don't mean that I have become free in the social sense, because in the Soviet Union many of us tried in general to write what we wanted. But maybe this is somehow a liberation from the direct bond with the reader, to whom a writer addresses himself. I don't know about the others, but I still mentally address myself to the same reader, and though I know that what we write here is very important to him, now I don't feel this as tangibly.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Thank you. It's my impression from reading émigré writings, fiction particularly, that, insofar as one can generalize, there is a common quality that distinguishes them from Western writing. And in my opinion they're often better than Western writing, to pick up a theme that Mr. Kohák mentioned earlier. Would it be fair, or is it stretching the point, to speak of a Russian literature that is still based on Russian experience but is free, and therefore distinguished from, Soviet literature in some ways, and certainly distinguished from Western writing?

VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: Well, I can talk of the difficulties I have encountered in the West. It's not even the fact that I have lost touch with my readers, with the millions of Russian readers with whom I actually have lost touch. The difficulty is based on something else.

We Soviet writers were suffocated by lies, by the absence of truth, and by the possibility of setting forth this truth in Russia. But we derived a certain pleasure from what can be called tightrope writing. Now this is all behind us, and we have to ask who needs us. There are few Russian readers, and our problems aren't very interesting to the French, Americans, or Germans. But that's another question. The real problem is that now I write, and I don't risk anything. So what I'm missing in the West is knowing that I'm courageous.

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NAUM KORZHAVIN: I think that the problems that existed for me in Russia exist here too. Despite the stupidity, the conferences, and all the rest here, I exist as I did there.

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH: I would like to add that despite what I said about the bond with the reader in the Soviet Union being felt less tangibly, all the same there is a bond, and they devour our books. Often here in the West I am asked, "But how, what, for whom will you write?" Every writer writes in the first place for the reader who will be reading his books in the same language in which they were written. And if these books are sufficiently common to all mankind, then they might be translated; and if they are translated well, then they will reach an audience in other languages. There are many writers here who, maybe because they have lost a sense of this bond, begin to write sloppily.

EFIM ETKIND: We have lived in the Soviet Union under Party terrorism, and we grew accustomed to this terror. Concretely, terrorism was expressed in the fact that one single opinion and one single literary style was prescribed. The expression of a differing opinion and a different style was viewed as subversive. For the writers who have come to the West, the most difficult thing of all has been to get used to the fact that different opinions and different styles have equal rights. So we must attend to an inner retuning, a polyphony of differing opinions.

I don't think that the Soviet attitude towards literature and thought is an expression of Soviet ideas at all. It's simply the habit of a monopoly of opinion—rightist, leftist, it doesn't matter what kind. This monopolistic demand on writers may be pro-Soviet or anti-Soviet; it is still an expression of Soviet ideology. During the time that I have been here, I have had to read more than one book with such a tyrannical nature. I think, for example, that Vladimir Maximov's *Saga of the Rhinoceri,* which is now being published, is such a terrorist, tyrannical book. Therefore I view it as a book belonging to Soviet ideology, regardless of the kinds of ideas it expresses. Victor Nekrassov spoke of courage, of the fact that one must be courageous there, while here it's possible to get by without courage. And he even spoke of a certain nostalgia for the risk. But taking risks is not necessary *only* there. For example, Siniavski's recent publication of a large article in the papers called "My Personal Experience of the Dissident Movement" is a show of courage, because the prevailing opinion differs from that which he expresses in the article, and to go against the prevailing opinion is to take a risk. So even here it's possible to satisfy

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one's nostalgia for taking a risk—which, by the way, Nekrassov has already done here more than once, in his travel sketches, which don't correspond with opinion established among emigrants in the West.

VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: I don't think that Maximov's *Rhinoceri* is his best work, but to say that this is Soviet ideology is, to put it mildly, unsophisticated. I think that we are fortunate here precisely because we can criticize one another without tripping anyone up or depriving them of a piece of bread. *We can criticize.* Here we're not threatened with imprisonment or expulsion from the Party, from the union. So let's cross arms without offending one another and without pinning labels on each other. We had enough of that in the Soviet Union.

MIHAJLO MIHAJLOV: I would like to answer Nekrassov in one way. Precisely speaking, I am not in exile; I am from the Yugoslav part of the Soviet Union; I am not an émigré. But, in general, I am a Yugoslav dissident who has been tried five times. I'm in a somewhat different position because, for almost two decades now, all my books and articles have been published in the West. I lectured at Yugoslav universities, and now I lecture at American universities, so for me it doesn't make as much difference being here. If a writer has something very important to tell the people, to tell somebody, he will find ways to do it whether he knows the language or not. So for me it's rather difficult to understand this business of saying, "I'm writing for these people, not for those people; I'm writing for Russian people, for Czech people, and Ukrainian people and so on." I don't see any sense in that.

VALÉRY CHALIDZE: This is just a suggestion for our chairman. Because it will be a long time before so many prominent writers and dissidents are together in one room again, maybe we should ask everyone's opinion about the future development of Russia.

EFIM ETKIND: In Stalin's time there was slavery in the camps, feudal dependence on the extreme exploitation in industry—the maximal development of monopolies in the form of state ownership of enterprises. I believe that development of the future must without fail take the course that mankind has taken up until now, the course of increasing man's freedom. I not only believe in the democratization of Russia, I am absolutely certain that this is a thing of the future, maybe not the near future, but it's inevitable. This is one of the reasons I stand for democratic development, and not for some sort of authoritarian system in Russia that would dignify the nonfreedom of man.

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VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: But what signs do you have to think that way? What grounds for such optimistic thoughts?
EFIM ETKIND: The only reason I have been able to cite until now is historical development, which has gone in one direction, despite possible zigzags. I am sure that there are always zigzags in history, but I still believe in history, despite the fact that this morning someone said that perhaps history does not exist at all. So my optimism stems from an examination of historical laws and the historical development of the past.
WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Mr. Grigorenko may have to leave early for personal reasons, and he would like to speak.
GENERAL GRIGORENKO: I am also a democrat. But I'm very much afraid of being the only one who is right, very afraid. I doubt whether I'm right, even though I'm a democrat. Do you think that the person who tries to prove that he is the only one who is right and that everyone else is wrong would be better in power than the present rulers? I think that a broad discussion should be conducted, and I think that my opponent is right only in the measure that I am right. Of all the speeches I have heard, I was unpleasantly struck only by the one in which Maximov was criticized while Siniavski was praised. If I received such praise I would not be pleased. I could take the label, Soviet, from Maximov and pin it on the person who spoke here. I think that probably half of those present here have never read *Rhinoceri*. Nothing was said about it, except that it was Soviet. I think that we must avoid this labeling.

To tell the truth, there is another phenomenon that I don't like, that *samizdat* has made its appearance at this conference, which is abominable. Here any sort of publication can be created and used to make trivial attacks on serious newspapers. Create your own newspaper and then attack! Look how many we had in New York. They sprang up everywhere like mushrooms after a rain. In the Soviet Union *samizdat* is a heroic feat, but here, it is a petty squabble.

One more thing. My friend Korzhavin spoke with much praise about my book, but he did question the title. He said that the book was one thing and the title another. Here the author is at fault for not being able to show the connection. But the reader has to play his part. Misunderstandings arise because terms get mixed up. In the Russian language "underground" and "illegal" battles are very similar concepts. Solidarity is not underground. Solidarity has now become illegal, but it operates openly on the streets. The underground

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is always connected with a plot to seize power. Our present government, the whole Soviet regime, came from the underground. They're the rats. If an underground organization is created which can overthrow this regime, then they'll be worse. I wanted to show in my book that I too served these rats, and I don't want others to end up the same way. Conspirators never look for those who are right and wrong among them, conspirators look for total unity. All those not in agreement are destroyed in the underground, and then others not in agreement come to the surface.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Which of the panelists wants to continue the discussion of the future of the Soviet Union before we turn the discussion to the floor?

VALÉRY CHALIDZE: Ladies and gentlemen, I can't predict the future of Russia, but in my expectations and hopes I am in complete agreement with Etkind. I hope for democratization. I, of course, don't think that it will come about in the next ten years—it's a question of decades and possibly several generations. And it's possible that we'll see even more terrible zigzags, which under this type of regime is possible. But I would like to clarify one thing. When we began to speak out in defense of human rights, many people in Russia, including intelligent and sober-minded people, criticized us for the fact that we did not set up any political program. For many our declarations, statements, and references to laws and to rights were a game of words. Right now in many respects the situation is the same. We have many critics within the country. Recently the French journal *Alternatives* conducted a series of interviews with anonymous authors in Russia. It's a most interesting document, and contains very skeptical opinions about human rights activists.

In just the same way, many in the West have said to me and my colleagues that, without a political program our movement is not vital and has no special significance. I think the following explanation should be made. From the practical side, our movement wouldn't exist if, from the very first, it had had political, firmly expressed goals—first and foremost because we would never have reached an understanding among ourselves. But there is another strategic—and decisive—consideration. We really were not aiming to establish another political system in the Soviet Union, or to achieve power in the Soviet Union, or to alter the existing system. We criticized this system, criticized the conduct of the government. But the main role of the civil rights movement—and this continues to be so—is to create

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social conditions that will allow for the idea of pluralism and political activity. Perhaps ten or twenty years from now people will ridicule the human rights activists for not having set forth a political goal sooner, but the groundwork for the setting forth of political goals was in fact laid by the human rights movement. Connected with this lack of understanding by our own people is the fact that we are perceived strangely in the West, where people live in an atmosphere of political disputes, where they don't have to create the requisite conditions for such disputes. This reminds me of the story of how one American was enraptured with the lawn surrounding an English castle, so he said to the gardener, "I'll give you a lot of money if you'll come to my house in America and make me such a lawn, such soft grass around my house." And the gardener answered, "You don't have to spend so much money, just cut your grass every month for three hundred years, and you'll have such a lawn." In the West you already have this soft grass, this pluralistic atmosphere (we musn't confuse pluralism with democracy), in which you can argue political issues and engage in political battles. In Russia this doesn't exist.

The West's lack of understanding us is expressed in a rather comical way. A lot of political groups consider us theirs because we criticized the government, just as they criticize their government here. And the Right sometimes considers us theirs because we criticize Communism. This morning a nice lady said she couldn't understand why we don't organize a peace movement in the Soviet Union. She thinks we live with the same problems. But our problems are entirely different. Here the women fight for liberalization and for the right not to have to do housework and stay at home with the children. But in Russia, women would gladly fight for the right to stay at home with the children. Forgive me for these intimate details, but when feminists in the United States burned their bras in public, the women of the Soviet Union joked, "Why burn them? They should send them to us!" These are all minor examples, but thousands of such examples could be cited; And, sometimes, listening to Westerners argue about their problems, I think of a certain Jewish joke, where the teacher asks a grade school pupil the sum of five and three. He answers, "I wish I had your problems."

I am far from attempting to belittle Western problems. There are a lot of them here and they are very serious, and in many respects the fate of civilization depends upon their solution. But many Russian problems are simply at another stage of discussion. From a cer-

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tain point of view it's gratifying that many and the most varied political groups in the West take us for their own. Why? Because if we express something that is supported by the most varied political groups, then we have managed to express something common to all mankind.

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH: I also think that there must be changes in the Soviet Union, and I am even certain that they will come about in one way or another. A change in the present leadership is coming. People say, "So what, whoever comes next might be even worse," and this is entirely possible. Many people think that then there will be a complete tightening of the screws. But I don't think this will happen regardless of who takes over. Because for the screws to be tightened, let's say, to the point that they were under Stalin, it would require at least the illusion of a great goal, which there was at that time: a similar tightening of the screws could be accomplished only with a flourishing ideology. But Communist ideology is lying in ruins. Yesterday I said, and I repeat now, that I do not know a single person in the Soviet Union who believes in Communism.

But now the Soviet leaders don't even know what to promise. Twenty years ago Khrushchev promised that in 1980 Communism would be built. In 1980, the joke went around that this year instead of the Communism that was promised earlier, we would have the Olympic Games. For example, what if General Jarulzelski tried right now to tighten the screws in Poland? What would come of this? I think the Soviet Union is in a difficult position right now, both economically and politically. And there's only one real way out—democratization. Of course the Soviet leaders don't want to do this, but I think that they'll be forced to, at least in some areas of the economy. Now the Soviet system is such that, if you touch it in one place, it begins to fall apart in another, and the present leadership understands this. Therefore, for the whole time of their leadership—I mean after the overthrow of Khrushchev—they have been trying to preserve the status quo, not to change anything absolutely. They, of course, will live out their lives without changes, but some new leaders will have to think at least five years ahead.

EUGEN LOEBL: I thought this conference was potentially one of the most important ones I'd ever have attended, but the last two speakers have made me think about this. Until now, I have been admiring the Russian dissidents who knew only the Soviet system and had a fantastic, I would say supernatural, creative force to maintain

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the spiritual continuum of the spirit of their nation and to create a spiritual movement of at least fantastic importance.

Having criticized those American philosophers in the fifties and sixties who advocated the end of ideology, and who introduced the most unhappy marriage of no ideology and spiritless pragmatism, I would say that this experience you are bringing to us here in America and to the West generally is of historical importance. But what I have heard here is a kind of historical determinism: it will be one generation, two generations, one hundred million deaths, five hundred million deaths. We don't have to do anything! But then why do we have dissidents? I don't know, my dear friend, whether you realize that this is Marxist philosophy. The basic dehumanization in Marxism is that it is not human beings and their drive to remain human beings that makes history, but classes that make history. Natural historical development makes history.

There is a very great danger. Though you live in the West, my friends, you don't see that the West is trying, in its pragmatism, in its narrow-minded, spiritless materialism, not to do anything! Now you come and say, "Don't do anything; history will do it. History will free you. Another generation of gangsters will come into the Politburo, and everything will be all right!"

On a recent lecture tour in Germany I encountered unbelievable anti-Americanism, a peace movement that is basically an appeasement movement. Some of the people have noble motivations, but it's a movement, in the objective sense, that helps the Soviets to bring about the unilateral disarmament of the West. Recently in Washington I spoke with a number of influential politicians. There, the answer to the primitive, unsophisticated European anti-Americanism is an equally simple anti-Europeanism. This is exactly what the long-term Soviet strategy is aimed at. But instead of coming here and saying, "Look, there are other forces here; make use of them," we are disappearing in determinism.

The Polish movement, in my view, is the most important political movement in the history of mankind. It is a movement for human dignity, not for a political party. The Poles demonstrate—not as in Czechoslovakia, where they wanted socialism with a human face and carried a party emblem. They go with the sign of the cross. And there is a deep national understanding, enforced by religious feeling, of the need to be human beings. What is America's answer to them? We ask, "Should we help the Poles? How shall we plan our

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help for the Poles—charity, credit, business with them?" We don't even realize that this is a false question! It's not a question of whether Americans should help Poles: the Poles are helping America to survive! The only real peace movement in the world is in Poland, because they make it impossible for the time being to create a hinterland. The Soviet military must figure that these people, just with their fists, are not afraid, and we in the West are afraid despite all the missiles and tanks and technology we have.

What I think is important in any such conference—and I really appreciate the efforts of the organizers of this conference—is to create a follow-up. We should learn the lesson of the striving of you Russians for those ideas and ideals that made Russia great. We should make use of the tremendous political force of the Poles, who take their human and national dignity as the measure of all values and who encourage the Americans to establish as a centerpiece of their policy—particularly foreign policy—a strategy based on the great human tradition of this great country. If they don't do this, they won't be a great country.

Suppose Mr. Walesa, or even the Soviet Union, suddenly had freedom. What kind of economic system would the trade union introduce in Poland? How would they create full employment and an efficient economy? Do you think they could apply Keynesianism, which ruined this country, or a supply-side economy, which is going to ruin this country further? What economic alternative do they have to offer? I think it should be our task, as a follow-up to this conference, to try to work out new means and ways, new theoretical concepts of how to build a human society—not a society that is perceived as a system of commodities or aggregates, but as a human system that has no unemployment, no inflation, no frustration, and where—even in the economic sphere—humanity will be the measure of all values.

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH: I want to say a few more words. As I understood it, Mr. Loebl criticized me. It seems I was even called a Marxist. This surprised me, because no one has ever considered me a Marxist; I have never been one. I've never even read Marx.

I don't know how the dissident movement will develop in the future. It's in a very difficult position. But, as Chalidze has said, it has to a significant degree prepared the ground for something that will take place. It's already played an enormous role. I think the

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events in Poland today wouldn't have occurred if there had not been a human rights movement in the Soviet Union.

VALÉRY CHALIDZE: Mr. Loebl's speech was passionate. I didn't understand it all, but I think I understood the last part. And I think it's an example of how we are considered allies while we still haven't expressed our opinion on certain questions. For example, our movement has never spoken out on the topics of unemployment, inflation, or frustrations in society. I won't speak for all my colleagues, but I have nothing against a society with inflation, unemployment, and frustrations. They are natural phenomena in a normally developing society. On the other hand, I fear all of those who want to build an unnatural society without inflation, without unemployment, and without frustrations.

ERAZIM KOHÁK: I think we have to distinguish between the future of the Soviet Union and the future of Russia. As for the Soviet Union and the Soviet empire, I have seen enough of its internal workings to be confident that this empire will perish and ought to perish. As far as the future of Russia goes, I think we are in a totally different sphere. With respect to the Soviet Union, historical determinism on an economic basis might be applicable. As for Russia, Petr Grigorenko spoke directly to the point—that whether Russia will remain the dark outskirts of Europe or whether it will find a new future for itself will very much depend upon the ability not to live underground. Living underground is a longstanding Russian tradition. We in Central Europe are also infected with it. If there is a future, I think Grigorenko is absolutely right: it is in standing up, in not living with a lie. And the greatness of the movement that in the West is called the "dissident movement" lies precisely in the fact that it is not a conspiracy but a group of people who stand up regardless of the cost, who are no longer willing to conspire, who now refuse to live a lie.

NAUM KORZHAVIN: The reason we don't have a program is not that we have quarreled among ourselves. We have no program and therefore have nothing to quarrel over. No one, from Solzhenitsyn to whomever you like, has set forth a program of action. There's no program, but there is a situation which consists of the fact that our Russian, Soviet society—whichever you prefer—is a broken structure. Communications among the people inside the country—in almost every bloc country—have been destroyed. Today they want to

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do this to Poland. Poland is the only country in the socialist camp where this hasn't been done, which has managed to preserve its national structure. If they succeed in imprisoning or exiling four thousand or four hundred thousand people there, Poland will become a Soviet nation. But for now we must defend it, because our salvation is the salvation of the West, even if only the West remains democratic. But if freedom perishes here too, then it's all over for us.

ABRAHAM BRUMBERG: I did want to say something before about the use of the word "dissident," which, frankly, began to trouble me as the conference went on. We've had mainly two categories of people who have spoken to us for the last two or three days. There is one category of writers, people who are in the area of *belles lettres* who write books, poems, essays. We've heard from Siniavski, from Voinovich, and others. Then there's another category of people who were engaged in certain political activities in the larger sense of the word; and I would put, of course, Pavel Litvinov in this category. Now, when we speak of dissidence we speak of activity in which they engaged while they were in the Soviet Union. What made them dissidents was their resolution to say no to the rule of the lie; to say no to the rule of what might be called the new class. What made them dissidents was—whatever their political program—a certain political stance they took. Now that they are amongst us, I don't think we should look at them as dissidents, but as representatives of the democratic movement in the Soviet Union. Dissident is far too restrictive a term. And as far as the writers are concerned, I think both those here and their colleagues in Russia represent Russian literature and not dissidence. They were Russian writers when they published their work there, and they did not cease to be Russian writers when they came to this country.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Thank you. I'm sure you are aware that the use of the term *dissidence* has an historic origin, and that it is used here for the sake of convenience. There is a good book by Shragin, which describes the origin, the meaning, and the currency of the term *dissidence.*

WOMAN FROM THE AUDIENCE: I would like to ask Mr. Kohák what will cause the Soviet empire to perish?

ERAZIM KOHÁK: Empires throughout history are like bicycles: they manage to keep their balance only as they are moving forward. What I have seen since the occupation of my country and all through the occupied portions of Europe, is that its system is no longer a dy-

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namic, forward-moving one. It is a retrenching system that is very much dependent on threats and favors which loses effectiveness once the source of goodies—the productivity—is no longer there. An empire has to be able to heal or satisfy the frustration of its people, either with bread or with circuses. The circus that we've had—it was called the Great Russian Revolution and its Aftermath—has lost its attractiveness. Now the economic system is less and less able to provide the bread. This is why the system cannot continue.

WOMAN FROM AUDIENCE: Has dissent among the East European countries and between the Soviet Union and the East European countries been connected? Is there some kind of network? Someone said that Poland's opposition had been made possible in part by the democratic movement within the Soviet Union. Is the Polish opposition feeding back into the other countries to create some kind of sense of solidarity among them, giving them greater strength than they would have had on their own?

BORIS SHRAGIN: Unfortunately, such interconnections don't exist. Even worse, I would say that we know too little and too superficially about the achievements in Poland and Czechoslovakia. In this connection, I would like to tell you that this year, in New York, we began to publish a Russian magazine called *Problems of Eastern Europe.* This magazine includes many translations of dissident works from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Russia. So far as I know, this is the first attempt of its kind to make connections on an intellectual level. I think this is tremendously important, because as you can see from our discussions here, our political perspective, for several reasons, such as those mentioned by Mr. Chalidze, is rather vague. The dissident movement in Eastern Europe is stronger than in Russia.

WOMAN FROM AUDIENCE: Several of you have mentioned the fact that ideology is not alive now in the Soviet Union. I'd like to ask when exactly it died. In the period between the war and, maybe, the death of Stalin or the emergence of Khrushchev, did Soviet writers believe in an actual ideology, or was it rather a kind of mechanical rhetoric that was used for certain purposes?

VIKTOR NEKRASSOV: No, in my country ideology never existed in people's hearts, only in *Pravda.* Instead of ideology, during the war and the postwar period, there was the euphoria of victory. And in this lies the tragedy of my own generation. We thought that we had defeated fascism and that we had brought the world truth and beauty.

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And we even forgave Stalin the terror, the collectivization, and the blood of our land. But, as you know, this didn't last long. Ideology crept in—for me personally in the journal *Znamya,* where in 1946 I published my first piece of work, *In the Trenches of Stalingrad.* This novella was published at the same time as the resolution by the Central Committee to destroy Akhmatova and Zoshchenko. This was the first sign—we shall call it a sign—of ideology and tragedy creeping into our lives. After that there was a crescendo: June 17 in Berlin, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Afghanistan, etc.

MAN FROM AUDIENCE: A couple of months ago I was at a rally at Town Hall of artists and writers in support of the Solidarity movement—the famous meeting at which Susan Sontag made her comparison between communism and fascism, which most of the people in the audience booed. For me the most controversial remark of the meeting was when the American writer Gore Vidal got up, and, after a few perfunctory remarks in support of Solidarity, went on to say something to the effect that, here in the United States we are also an occupied country, that from the moment President Truman started the cold war, we've been occupied by the military-industrial complex. That remark drew a lot of applause. I'm sure that this kind of attitude on the part of American writers and intellectuals is not particularly unique; there is a tendency to borrow the metaphors of your experience, of totalitarianism, and to apply them loosely and indiscriminately to any perceived injustices in the West.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: I thank you all, the panelists and the audience, for an interesting and provocative if somewhat anarchical exchange. Maybe someday we can have another conference in Moscow.

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Manès Sperber

REMINISCENCES

It was surely a curse to be born at the beginning of the century, in a Jewish shtetl in East Galicia. A Jewish child had to start learning to read when only three, spending many hours under the rod of strict teachers, first to master his letters and soon to translate difficult Hebrew texts. The gentile children, however, started school at six or even seven, and learned to read gradually, and moreover in the language that they knew. Nor did they have to pay constant attention lest they stumble over the innumerable barriers, the commandments and prohibitions which the child had to obey to the letter as soon as he understood the words in which they were formulated. Should one therefore have envied the others for not being Jewish? This question not one of us considered, since we were convinced that it was a matchless blessing to be born a Jew. That the others despised us, hated us, persecuted us, cast them into injustice. Their guilt in this matter also proved what a misfortune it was not to be a Jew.

On the other hand it was true, alas, that the misery of the Diaspora hung over us, that strangers had us in their power. For example, why did we have to use their language, rather than using ours? And because we were exiles, in the *Galuth,* we had to learn two or three times more than the others. Though we complained of this necessity, we were actually not unhappy over it, on the contrary. I have reason to be grateful, for instance, that as a result I love languages, that I love every language, that the magic of words is as enchanting to the elderly man as to the child in Zablotów who always had to steer his way between the Ukrainian and the Polish, between the Yiddish, and the Hebrew, and the German. Not every language strikes me as beautiful, but I sensed very early that each had its unique qualities, and that the world would not be the same if only one of them were missing. *Wasser, woda, majim* meant the same thing, just as, so I later learned, *aqua, eau,* and *water* did. But I sensed very early that each of these words had a vibration that

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Editor's Note: Translated from the German by Clara Winston.

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perhaps was not really hidden within them but which was evoked, carried by them. The Slavic *woda* is still for me, to this day, a fluid which is drawn from the well, the Hebraic *majim* bubbles up out of a spring, and the German *Wasser* comes out of a faucet, which a little child can turn on or off at will.

I think of the tall, powerful man who brought water to the house in all seasons. Two full buckets which he carried on his shoulders on a long pole like a yoke. He walked upright along the path to the well, his head held high. But his neck and back were deeply bowed when he returned from the well heavily laden.

Ordinarily he was paid for one run, that is for two buckets, or on a weekly fee, for which he took care of his customers according to their needs. We sat in the warm, often overheated rooms; sometimes we saw him through the iced-over window as a gigantic shadow bobbing by. I imagined that the man who carried on such work must make a lot of money at it, that he might possibly be the richest man in the shtetl. But if that were so, why didn't he stay in the warmth, near a tall tiled stove, and why did he stick at such hard work so late into the night? I raised these questions at the dinner table—as so often, we had guests with us—and aroused a peal of laughter. The four-year-old's observation was soon quoted as an example of childlike wisdom, not of precocity.

I was told that the work of the water carrier was indeed hard, but so simple that anyone who had not learned anything proper could perform it. That was why the man had to haul water from morning to night, merely to earn his daily bread. This was quite fair, even self-evident, but I found myself on the side of the water carrier. I am still on his side. . . .

The water carrier's lack of transcendence was a misfortune. But what did I feel as good fortune and happiness? Our faith, which governed everything and dictated our way of life down to the smallest detail? Yes and no. I realized soon enough that it drew upon us the hostility of all those who did not share that faith. I knew from childhood on that clinging to it could be more perilous than war and cholera. I was outraged that God rewarded us so badly for this faith, that in fact he punished us and never rewarded us. We were God's water carriers. If he were just, how could he let us go on being his water carriers through all the ages, to say nothing of demanding it of us?

All my early doubts about God's justice, about the goodness of people, about myself, who secretly skipped whole passages in my

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prayers, who sometimes lied to my father and mother and teacher—all these doubts did not shake my belief in the god of my forefathers, though they diminished my confidence that the Creator of the world could be helpful to us in our hour of need. One day, to be sure, when the Messiah would appear, everything would be arranged for the best, and no one would need God's help. But in the meantime, life was hard, or so I thought, even though my parents pampered my brothers and me. . . .

Urtschy was a tall old man who despite his years held himself as upright as a birch tree. In my memory everything about him was white—perhaps that accounts for the image of the birch. Not only his beard and forelocks, and his shaved head, but also the shirt, which he wore tieless, and his long socks were white. Moreover he was known for wearing a white tunic on high holy days, instead of the usual black caftan. This was his professional costume, by which he was known in the villages, where he always functioned as prayer leader. He was usually paid in kind, in food and bottles of liquor, which the village Jews distilled, sometimes legally, more often not, as did their non-Jewish neighbors.

Urtschy was the first alcoholic I met. My grandfather had been his fellow pupil in their youth and remained his closest friend all his life long. He could drop in at any hour of the day and far into the night, to ask after my father, with whom he always had "important matters" to discuss. This was usually a pretext to wet his whistle, for which he needed at least two glasses of brandy. He hardly ever accepted an invitation to meals and would excuse himself by saying that his son was waiting for him. Everyone knew his daughter-in-law seldom let him cross their threshold.

Why do I think of him now, of whom I probably knew nothing more than that he had lost his wife early, that he was a drinker, and in addition, my grandfather's best friend? Because of a strange event that occurred on the last of the autumnal holy days. In the night of the *Simchath-Tora,* the festival of joy, on which Jews annually give thanks to God for burdening them with his commandments—late at night someone knocked at our door, hesitantly at first, then more urgently. I woke up and listened. Father let a man in and lit the lamp in his office. I got out of bed, out of curiosity but also to assure myself that my father was in no danger. Through the glass pane of the door I saw Urtschy, again dressed entirely in white, sitting on the divan, his head wavering back and forth.

"I cannot sleep," he said, without opening his eyes.

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"Why not?" Father asked.

"Something terrible has happened to me: I have forgotten the nightly prayer—which I have said every night of my life, and now suddenly, it's gone! So would you say it, but very slowly. I am not so sober as I should be."

And I heard how my father slowly intoned the great night prayer, not the short one used by children. Urtschy repeated it with effort. If he went wrong on a word, he corrected it until it sounded right. As soon as he had spoken the last amen, he slumped over like one of the dead. Father covered him.

How far behind me all that lies! Yet no matter how far I have moved from people who say prayers, prayers in any religion, it is only with effort that I contain the emotion aroused in me by Urtschy, who could not let himself go to sleep before he had said every last word of the long night prayer. It was not out of fear of God's anger but out of that strange Hassidic love of God, who is like a generous, comforting older brother to him who prays. . . .

. . . Scarcely two years after our flight, from which we never returned, my interest in the village, in its inhabitants, even in the Urtschys, was totally extinguished. I hesitate to write the next sentence: Vienna swallowed me up. No, I do not like that way of putting it; it is an exaggerated expression for something exaggerated.

* * *

It may be that I would not have had the feeling of rootlessness if Hitler's victories had not had the catastrophic consequences which even today remain as present as though twenty-seven years had not passed since his downfall. If the Jewish shtetl still existed, they would belong, for me, to a distant past. Since they were wiped out so that nothing of what they were and might have become can pass into the future, Zablotów belongs to my present. It has found a home in my memories.

Yet before I became aware that Zablotów and the other shtetl no longer existed, I experienced an overwhelming sense of loss, which at first I could give no name. I was living then in Paris; it was a Friday evening in March 1938. I had turned on the radio, above all to hear the latest bulletins on the fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Then, totally unprepared, I heard the announcer say that Austria's hour of destiny had struck, that German troops would be entering Vienna within a few hours. I found the Vienna station and

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listened until late in the night. Thus I witnessed the sounds of the masses streaming in from all sides to the Ballhaus and soon overflowing the entire Heldenplatz. "Sieg Heil! Heil Hitler! Sieg Heil!" — ceaselessly those cries rang through the shabby room of my miserable hotel. In the course of that night a strange feeling of lostness overcame me, which went hand in hand with the sense of rootlessness. Naturally I felt anxious about my whole family and the many friends who should have emigrated long since, but had not done so because they could not tear themselves away from that city. In that night I discovered to my astonishment that Vienna was not just a city that had become closed to me for who knows how long, like Berlin since 1933. No, it was as though in those hours Vienna must disappear. In that night I forbade myself any homesickness for that city that I had boundlessly adored while still back in the shtetl, and which I had first begun to love, seriously and passionately, once she had disappointed me with her wicked enchantments.

"He knew this city too well, as one knows a woman one no longer loves," I wrote in my thoughts of Vienna, twenty-five years after that July 1916 when I had first set foot in the city. I was living at the time, in the fall of 1941, near Nice. When I looked out of my small window, I saw a tiny inlet and beyond it, shining in the sun, the surface of the sea, while to the left on a projecting height there was an olive grove. What a wonderful country! I appreciated it at every season, yet it was clear to me that I would not pine for it the way I had pined long years for Vienna, no matter where I happened to be. It was Vienna I pined for, not Zabłotów, which I had never loved, even though it was there I had first experienced what it meant to be at home.

* * *

Throughout my youth I lived in the belief that we stood at some threshold and had to be ready at any moment to cross it. Or, to put it differently we were in a passageway that we wanted to leave as soon as possible, so that we could finally pass beyond the intermezzo and enter the real action. Everything we did could only be preparation. When we attended — always in the cheap standing room — the expressionist plays of Hasenclever, Toller, Brecht, Bronnen, or Georg Kaiser, or read expressionist poetry, or looked at cubist pictures, we were not always enchanted by them, but we felt, though not always clearly enough, that all this was particularly relevant to

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us, because it prophesied the revolution, the future when all would be changed.

In the summer of 1920 it seemed that the proletarian revolution would come by way of Warsaw to Berlin, and then—who could say?—might perhaps reach Paris. But by the middle of August the picture changed. We tried to forget our disappointment, for events followed each other with breathtaking swiftness, all seeming to point to upheavals on which we were impatiently counting—we who were still conjugating almost entirely in the future tense. The defeats in Bavaria, Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic—all this meant, we thought, that the new world would supplant the old only after the most painful birthpangs. He who keeps his eyes fixed on the peaks can easily overlook the valleys and the deep chasms. And had I not, since my earliest childhood, been accustomed to discover the hills beyond the other hills?

* * *

Even now it is easy for me to compile a relatively detailed list of all my enthusiasms. . . . Like all young people I liked to be carried away, and felt deep gratitude toward anyone who gave me occasion for it. Doubts did not dampen these ardors, though they set limits to my credulity.

The infatuation would end, the enthusiasm would be snuffed out as wind will blow out a lighted candle. Or else it would gradually dissipate, unnoticed. When a friendship ends, one looks for a psychological explanation, some sad comfort. And in all such cases one tends to give way to the temptation to poison the spring from which one drank so greedily and to convince oneself and others that it was poisoned from the first. My memory is perhaps still true to my experience because I was able to resist almost effortlessly this tendency toward retroactive depreciation. . . .

I have been speaking of my youthful enthusiasms in an effort to understand why I did not immediately recognize, in the years 1921-22, the significance Alfred Adler had for me. During those first two years he impressed me, as he did so many of his audience, but he did not fill me with enthusiasm. Why not? One reason, one out of many, comes to the fore, which perhaps is not salient but is nonetheless noteworthy. It was a question of his language, its excess of everyday words from which he formed his sentences, glibly and colorlessly, so that I, like so many of his detractors, especially the

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Freudians, did not immediately grasp what was new and original in his thought. Expressions like "inferiority feelings," "sense of insufficiency," "striving for dominance," "search for mastery," "compensation," "sense of community"— "well, we know all that," people thought. Anyone might use such expressions, while Freud used terms which often enough were not his own but which impressed themselves on people as original terminology for original doctrines.

Only months later did I discover Adler's genius. This happened in his apartment on the Dominikanerbastei where he presented to his closest followers the case of a manic depressive, along with reflections on the nature of such cases and the possibility of their cure. In the course of this evening I learned a great deal more about mental derangement than I had known before or was later to learn from books or discussions. From that time on I knew that the criticism of Adler's sometimes overly flat language was perhaps not groundless but was without importance. It was a question of how one listened to him, to what extent one took part in his thinking aloud.

That evening Adler had several pages of notes before him, the case history of the illness, which he used as the starting point for his presentation. He spoke as though to himself, audibly enough, thinking aloud in a way typical of his applied method of contextual analysis, that process of dissection and recombination that made a whole out of the parts. It was during that evening that I first became an Adlerian and resolved to read everything he had ever published. And soon afterwards we began having those conversations in which, when we were alone, he told me details of his life.

What most encouraged me was that he took all my objections seriously and even accepted some of them as valid. He was an exemplary teacher for me, and I vowed that I would be thankful to him all my life. But I perceived early that that would not always be easy, since he sometimes in my presence would speak unfairly, with downright cruel sharpness, against friends and followers towards whom he had suddenly conceived mistrust. In such cases he was incapable of even listening calmly to the mildest intervention on behalf of the person he had unjustly maligned.

I sensed that someday he would pass the same devastating judgment on me, and I would have no recourse. And I imagined, when he shot me one of his fierce looks, that he was probably thinking: "He, too, will eventually betray me." But at once he would seem to put this thought from him. I, too, quickly suppressed my qualms.

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I spent many hours daily listening to men and women who thought they needed longer psychological treatment or full-scale psychotherapy because they could not "come to terms with themselves"; because they could not master their difficulties, inhibitions, fears, or obsessions with their own powers; because they were forever finding themselves in blind alleys; because they failed in their relationships with their parents, children, spouses, lovers, superiors, or underlings, or did not receive the recognition they thought they deserved; because they constantly created conflicts of which they felt themselves the victims; because they were unhappy in love or could not love; because they were sexually frigid, or sexually obsessed, or thought they loved only their own sex; because their jealousy or that of their partners made marriage a hell; because they could no longer tolerate their mate but feared separation more than the greatest of evils.

There were those who began speaking before they were properly seated and did not stop until they were already on the stairs. Others needed many hours before they got beyond the most meager beginnings, painful laments over troubles which they described inadequately, in used-up words they repeated too often. Others spoke quickly but continually faltered—runners who came in either too early or too late because they stumbled over their own legs. Finally there were the "roving patients": they knew all the respected specialists and maintained that they had read all the important books and therefore knew what Freud, Jung, Adler, Steckel, and others would think of their unusual case.

Almost all of them imagined that they were special, interesting cases. Adler often spoke of the fact that the neurotic soon becomes a stereotype: his way of provoking conflicts and reacting to them, of suffering and thus inducing pity in his near and dear, the "arrangements" of the neurotic manner of living—all this at first glance seems so unusual, but at second glance reveals itself as an imperfect but automatic mechanism, as a machine for producing the same old stuff again and again, a womb which gives birth to oldsters. . . .

* * *

It happened in Leningrad, in the square in front of the Finland Station. A poorly dressed, gaunt man was pushed off the sidewalk onto the trolley tracks by a swarm of heedless, hurrying passersby. He stood there a moment in a daze, paying no attention to the warn-

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ing bell of the streetcar, perhaps not even hearing it. A policeman hurled himself at him and began pounding his neck and shoulders with his fists. As the man slowly turned round, the fists in gray woolen gloves landed on his brow and chin.

In the last light of that gloomy autumn day I stared at the gloves and at the victim staggering from the blows, making no effort either to defend himself or to flee. And the many curious onlookers—why did none of them intervene? Finally the policeman released his victim, who lurched back to the sidewalk and disappeared in the thick crowd.

My memory has retained this sorry incident since September 1931 in all its details, so that I could effortlessly reenact it on that spot. At each of the countless discussions about the Soviet Union in which I later participated in Berlin, it persistently came to my mind. But for ten years I suppressed it like a shameful secret and later made it the experience of a character in one of my novels, as the "dark point" in the consciousness of a German communist who was later to be liquidated in Moscow when he refused to be cast in the role of provocateur, spy, and saboteur in one of Stalin's show trials.

One night on the way home, our path crossed that of a big man holding with both hands a long sack slung over his back. He walked slowly—the burden must have been unusually heavy. The sight of him frightened me. Even Lisa, usually so quick to speak, hesitated before she gave her explanation: the man was an illegal burier of corpses, an old but still strong, very religious Jew, who brought the bodies of pious, fellow believers to the Jewish cemetery, so that they might be buried in hallowed ground with the proper prayers and rituals. Naturally the police knew what was going on, but they let these fanatics alone. Perhaps a few militia officers had been bribed.

Since early youth I had been horrified by funeral ceremonies, with their feeble rituals of mourning and consolation, with the corpse dressed and laid out like a doll which one could not identify with the recently departed. Dead bodies are unclean; they should be isolated from the living. Anyone who has lived survives in the thoughts and also in the bodies of his descendents. All this had been impressed upon me while I was still a child in the shtetl.

What would happen to this corpse which the old man was hauling through Moscow was a matter of indifference to me. But for long hours that nightmarish image remained with me, and did not fade even after I had freed myself from the mood and returned to reality.

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An irrepressible sense arose in me that the Jewish question had not been solved in the Soviet Union and that anti-Semitism had not been overcome. . . .

* * *

I am no longer sure what day in January 1933 brought sensational and unbelievable news that the government was allowing the Nazi troops to rally on the Bülowplatz on Sunday, the 22nd of January. This square was known throughout Germany as the center of the German Communist Party, which had its headquarters there in the Karl-Liebnecht-House.

On that Sunday the communists deserted the square, and while all Germany followed events, the SA and SS brazenly paraded there with their banners, showing the world that they had nothing to fear from the present and that in the near future they could expect to acquire complete power over Germany.

The Communist Party had not only refrained from mobilizing its own armed Red Front units, but had also strictly forbidden communists to do the slightest thing that might tip off the Nazis that they were unwelcome intruders in this neighborhood. The Party had ordered its members and sympathizers to play dead.

I seldom took part in street marches in Berlin, and usually only in the company of friends. But a few days after that Nazi demonstration, I found myself thrown in with a group of marchers who lived outside the city, and I stayed with them to the end. Even those among them who knew each other hardly spoke. The demonstrators had a good reason for keeping quiet, which everyone was thinking of and no one wanted to express: We should have been here on *Sunday,* but now it hardly matters; by now it is too late. We shake our fists at our enemies' backs, we spit into the void against the wind, and the spit flies back in our faces. . . . Of course we had turned out, we marched in orderly columns, shouted all the slogans, raised our clenched fists and intoned "Red Front!"—but where was that front? To be sure, shock over the events of Sunday and discipline had brought us out here on this Wednesday, but also a hope, a sad, often abused hope to which we continued to cling.

The memory of this demonstration and the men with whom I marched for several hours, or the two tired older women in front of us and the young worker with the cracked glasses behind me—this memory is somewhat hazy in its details. But it has not ceased to

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serve as an admonition to me. Because of it I hesitated too long, for almost five years, to break with a communism gone sour. Because of it I have never ceased to regard the cause of working people as my own—although since that time without illusions, with a confidence that nothing else has paralleled.

Like so many others, once the Reichstag fire had taken place, I seldom spent my nights at home, but at the homes of friends who had no need to fear the morning house checks by the police and the SA. At the apartment of the family that gave me shelter the night of March 5, a proletarian comrade from another district of the city turned up, a man of about thirty-five who was well known in his factory and in the Party for his intelligence, militancy, and boldness; he influenced not only fellow-believers, but others as well.

Hannes, as he was called even by those who knew him only slightly, had been up and about since early morning, patrolling the voting centers, to make sure that the SA did not prevent known opponents of the Nazis from entering. Uniformed Nazis had surrounded all the community and district offices, and according to the particular situation were trying to curry favor or intimidate, and to drive away anyone they suspected of opposition.

We sat by the radio and waited for the election results, which at first came only in a trickle and with the passing hours more profusely—until long after midnight. We drank, joked, and at times discussed the matter seriously. We were expecting no surprises; the decision this time would not come from the ballot boxes. The optimists among us, who were sure the Communist Party would gain many votes, especially at the expense of the Socialist Party, were disappointed; we others saw our drop in votes as moderate and ascribed it not only to the terror tactics of the Nazis but also to the passivity of the Party, which had left some disenchanted and driven others, the many unemployed in the Ruhr area, for instance, into the enemy camp.

Hannes and I stayed by the radio until about two o'clock, but by that time had had enough. We made ourselves comfortable on mattresses and wanted to sleep. But sleep did not come easily. After a while Hannes said that he was too uneasy to sleep. So I sat up and lit a cigarette. After several false starts, Hannes finally managed to say what was on his mind. He simply wanted me to give him a psychological explanation for something that had happened to him that morning in front of the Schöneberg City Hall. Nothing

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unusual, just the usual sparring with the Nazis. This time it was a matter of driving another man from the square. Hannes grabbed him by the back of the head, the fellow reeled but would not collapse, and started punching. He landed one on Hannes's forehead, then almost hit his eye. Hannes got his hands around his throat. And then it happened—suddenly two SS men were standing before Hannes, both with revolvers in their hands. One of them kicked him in the shins. That was bad, but to be expected under the circumstances. But the other one came right up to him, face to face, and suddenly Hannes had the revolver up against his heart. And that was it. What happened next? Nothing and everything, so to speak. Suddenly his knees no longer seemed to belong to him, nor his legs and the ground under his feet; it all caved in. And his heart was also gone—it had stopped beating.

He was no coward, Hannes said reflectively, not more cowardly than anyone, probably braver, in fact. When he was around shooting—and it wasn't only one side which did the shooting—then he used his gun and stood fast, and did not notice until afterwards that he had been scared. But the gun's muzzle at his heart and this young, rosy-faced pipsqueak with the fish eyes so close that he blotted out everything else, even the sky—that was something else, not fear but a terror that in a second could turn a body into a limp rag.

"And I haven't told you the worst part yet. If he had questioned me, I would have blurted out everything. I would have betrayed the comrades, can you understand that? Anyone who knows me wouldn't believe it . . ."

"But you didn't betray anyone, Hannes," I reassured him.

"True, but that was only because he didn't ask me anything but just kept mum as a fish, with his fish eyes. You're a psychologist, so I want to know what a person can do against that kind of terror, I mean, what can be done so you stand your ground?"

In fact he did not need my explanation. He needed to talk—about himself, his family, his successes in the last few weeks as one of the fighting members of the Red Front. He did not notice, and it did not occur to me until later, that he was providing a complete confession, which would have given the police and the Nazis information on conditions and incidents within the Communist Party and on the steps it had taken since November for safeguarding its illegal existence. He is spilling secrets, I thought. To put an end to it, I turned off the ceiling light, but he talked on. When he finally stopped to

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catch his breath, I asked him what he thought of the defection of Red Front men to the Nazis and whether he believed the trend would intensify rapidly now.

The longer Hannes spoke, moving circumspectly from one point to the next, the clearer it became to me that without his knowing it he was reversing his standpoint, so that in the end the deserters had become almost a vanguard. If the Party did not immediately proclaim an uprising against the still shaky regime, then it would surely last for many years. The Hitler people would make sure no one, at least no working man, would get a job unless he belonged to one of their organizations. In that case, all the workers would naturally have to truckle—the women would see to that; they would not let the children go hungry merely because their fathers would not do what was necessary to provide for their families. "Well, this would be the time for an about-face, better sooner than later, so we could undermine the Nazi organization from within, you get it, from within."

When I did not agree, Hannes mustered other arguments for this "strategy for the future," as he called it. He repeated them until he himself was bored and finally fell asleep in the middle of a sentence. The night was not over; I put out the light and waited for sleep, which did not come until dawn and was breaking. I awoke around noon. Hannes had left long before that.

"Perhaps he will not come again today. But you should stay here if you like," the mistress of the house, an old friend of mine, said. I hesitated to tell her anything about my night's conversation with Hannes, to warn her. But I advised her not to take anyone in the following nights. One had to reckon with the mistrust of the neighbors, all of whom had hung out the swastika flag. My friend said, "It's not certain whether Hannes will come again this evening, but if he doesn't—we haven't the slightest reason not to trust him, have we?" I did not answer. She looked into my eyes—I turned away. She understood.

* * *

On March 20 I was finally transferred, put into a police van, where I was shoved into a man-high but very narrow cubicle whose upper wall was a kind of wire lattice, through which one could see out. My eyes adapted quickly, and were soon able to piece together

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the outside world in the spring sunlight. The buoyant movements of passersby, dressed in their light summer clothing, carried me away, took my mind off my own misery for a few minutes. It was only six days since I had been torn away from this world of free beings, but it was as if I had found it again after a very long and painful separation. Not for a single second could I forget that I was being taken toward an unknown fate, that I was not being released from protective custody but was on my way to prison, and that the most terrible of my nightly fears might soon happen to me.

With several other prisoners I was asked the usual questions and searched as a formality. We went down long passageways; my cell lay at the outermost edge. An SS man entered it first, surveyed suspiciously the dirty wall, spattered in places with blood, kicked the bedstead, threw a glance at the bucket by the door, then at the barred window, and went back into the passageway. The guard explained that I was not allowed to lie or sit on the bed during the day, and that trying to climb up toward the window was strictly forbidden. Until further notice I would keep my own clothing. I was entitled to a bar of soap and a washcloth, which lay by the washbasin. There were no books from the library, nor were people of my sort permitted to receive packages. And until further notice no letters.

Loud voices, the sound of a ladle scraping against a pot, woke me. I took the bowl, the cup, and the spoon from the shelf, the door was unlocked, another guard stood there. I received a plate of potatoes and cabbage, along with some liquid, presumably a soup of some sort, a piece of bread and a brownish beverage. Before the door banged shut, the guard said, "Hey, it's not that bad." The food was bearable, and I applied myself to it eagerly; the bread was even tasty. The drink smelled of herring.

In the first few days I enjoyed the silence, said not a word to the guards who brought the food, answered, when it was required, with a look, a gesture. Just as in the police jail, I ate as much as was necessary not to be hungry, and was becoming weaker every day. This did not trouble me. My exercise in the cell, marching strenuously from the door to the window and back, had to be interrupted more and more often while I rested on the stool.

On the night of the third day a terrible form of self-torture broke out in me: the oscillation between a stubborn hope, a feverish expectation of being released any day now, or at the latest by the end of the week, and deep despondency, the conviction that I was lost,

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that I had walked into this trap for no good reason and had foolishly remained in it until the door slammed shut on me. Sometimes the night was filled with hopefulness, sometimes the early hours of the morning flooded me with illusions. But it was certainly my greatest accomplishment as a trained psychologist that I was finally able to live as a dead man in suspension. From that time on I no longer felt fear—the game was up; there was no more I could lose. I stopped listening hard when the name of a prisoner, who was perhaps being released, was called from the far end of the passageway where the guards congregated. Many of these names sounded like my own. But now it did not matter to me, for I was waiting for nothing and no one.

When I look back these twenty-seven years or so, everything comes back with an amazing clarity. That was my last detachment from the present, through a perverted one, because cut off from any future. If only one more week was to be permitted me, I thought I might as well relive the entire past. In my head I wrote about all I had seen in the course of my life, as in a landscape. I forbade myself to linger too long over my feelings. It was dangerous to think about the people I loved, had loved, who loved me. What violence I did to myself, what toll it took—let it pass; I shall not describe it.

My impatience grew to the degree that I took it for granted that many people—in Berlin, but surely also in Vienna—were energetically working for my freedom. I was sure that my father would leave no stone unturned to save me, and that he would succeed. That I had been transferred back into the custody of the police seemed to me the first of his achievements.

In the course of those days I retraced all my steps to those people who would not accept the idea that I was done for. I clung to them, while awake and in my dreams. So I was no longer alone for even a second. And I spent hours conjuring up the fulfilled promise of freedom, as though it were already a reality, merely obscured by a thick morning fog. I conjured up Dalmatia before me, its skies at noon and a silver crescent moon at evening mirrored in the water of a tiny inlet.

"You see, today is the Führer's birthday," said the policeman who took me over from the guards. He walked behind me through many corridors, at each of whose innumerable intersections I would stand and wait until he directed me with one word: right, left, or straight. In the office they handed me the release form, telling me

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that I would do well to get out of the country that same day. They gave me one of the suitcases they had taken. It was not heavy, which meant they were keeping my manuscripts. The policeman accompanied me to the main entrance. "I suppose you'll be going home to Mother," he said, as he left me on the sidewalk.

I saw Berlin again twenty-seven years later. It was no homecoming, not even a return, but a ghostly visitation. None of my friends were there any longer, none of the comrades with whom I had shared the last crumbs of a great hope.

* * *

I spent the time from the spring of 1933 to May 1934 in Yugoslavia, with a long stay in Vienna and a week in Prague as interruptions. I had been in Zagreb only a few days when I started giving lectures which drew even larger audiences than my former ones. Utter strangers, older and younger people, would come up to me; their joy in my release moved me, gave me courage for my new conviction: that out of errors and their consequences, and out of suffering one can draw material for the meaning one has to give life precisely when it is in dire peril and threatens to lose all its meaning.

Forty-three years separate me from that early summer in 1933, the summer of a friendship which almost made me forget what had happened and the horrors in the offing. Hardly any of the people whose nearness filled me with joy, and to whom I looked for unquestioning understanding, are still alive. Most of them fell victim to violence. . . .

One murdered friend was Djuka Cvijić, killed not by the Nazis or the Ustachi, but by Stalin's men. One of the first leaders of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia, he had been sent into exile on orders from the Russians and later had been "shelved." . . . Through him I came into contact with those Yugoslavian communists who directed the illegal party from Vienna. Among others I met the secretary general, Milan Gorkić, and members of the Croatian Peasant Movement. Yet of all these men, Djuka was the only one whose human qualities and political astuteness inspired instant confidence in me. That is why I never hesitated to carry out missions in Yugoslavia which might have been very dangerous for me. I took it for granted that he had thought everything out, and had given me these assignments for good reasons. Of course he was often wrong, as is everyone who takes political positions and cannot avoid the necessity

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of making fateful decisions. Still I believe to this day that he was a remarkably intelligent, at once passionate and skeptical politician. Dedicated to the cause from earliest youth, he refused to compromise his ideals, and atoned for that in Moscow with his life.

In October or at the latest November 1933 we both arrived at the conviction that very soon now, before the end of winter, an uprising of the Socialist Party and its branch organizations could take place in Austria. It was bound to happen, in fact, because the leaders of the rightist groups involved in the civil war had methodically plotted to draw the socialist into a confrontation. Since at that time, nine months after Hitler's seizure of power, the communists and their sympathizers were still calling the socialists fascists or Nazi accomplices and, at least in words, were fighting them as though they remained the arch enemy, we decided to inform Moscow without delay of the impending events and to warn in no uncertain terms against mistaking the real situation and the mood in the socialist camp. We spent hour after hour discussing in what way, with what arguments, we could make them understand. A report which Djuka had submitted in his capacity as foreign political observer for Tass, was answered by a sharp rebuke. Letters to Bela Kun, who played an important role in the Comintern, Manuilski, and some other comrades highly regarded in the Kremlin, went long unanswered. Finally the instructions came; we were to pay no attention to such coffeehouse gossip and should stop bothering the Comintern with it.

But Djuka would not give up. He penned a report which he sent not to any communist organization but to the Narkomindjel, the foreign ministry of the Soviety Union. He was convinced that there were enough people there who would at least seriously consider the question why and under what conditions such an uprising might occur.

It is well known that Moscow, which does not believe in tears, Moscow, which had led the German communists into unresisting defeat, let the communist penpushers go on as before castigating the socialists, who shortly afterwards, on February 12, 1934, fought a battle in Austria, a battle they were bound to lose. But it was they and not the German communists who were willing to risk armed resistance.

The fact that he turned out to be right sealed Djuka's fate. A short while later he was called to Moscow and was there killed by the

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GPU without ever being tried, the first of the Yugoslavian communists to be so treated. When I received no message from him, and no one brought news of him from Moscow, I had to conclude that he had been liquidated.

When I finally broke with communism, it was also on his account, for the thought that I was on the side of his murderers had become unbearable.

* * *

The political émigré is in all important respects the very opposite of the tourist. While he may act as though the train which is to bring him home were already gathering steam, he cannot predict whether he will be going home in a week, in a month, or not for several years. He also does not know how long he can keep paying his rent, yet is aware that he, like many of his fellow sufferers, will be owing an ever lower rent and living ever more wretchedly. He will of necessity move around a good deal, always seeking the company of his own kind or other foreigners. The profound indifference of the Parisians, their determined refusal to be drawn into the life of a stranger, or to let a stranger intrude on their own existance—this attitude allows every individual a degree of personal freedom that one encounters hardly anywhere else. This attitude was useful to the exiles, but it also made it possible for the poorest, the loneliest among them to go under in France, as I once wrote, to "drown on the sidewalk, in the open air, in the midst of a throng of people, without a single passerby's turning around to look at him."

The German émigrés were everywhere, but especially in Paris, only one group among many. Not the most unhappy, not the most apathetic, and not even the most fragmented. Yet they were the least liked, because they were German, because they were Jewish, because they not only made themselves the most conspicuous, but also got on the Frenchmen's nerves with a warning they kept repeating, a warning the French did not want to hear and in any case planned to ignore. And a common superstition makes the bringer of bad news suspect; from time immemorial he has been seen as partly responsible for the calamity of which he brings word, as wittingly or unwittingly an accomplice of those he would warn against.

In Paris Willi Münzenberg had set up headquarters, along with Babette Gross and other associates, immediately after Hitler's seizure of power. In the next few years he accomplished a good deal.

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He counterattacked against the Nazis' propaganda outside of Germany by flooding many countries with his "Brown Books," translated into many languages. He moved his readers by instilling in them not only a fear and a horror of the Nazis but also the wish to unmask and resist them.

In a narrow deadend street which most passersby on the Boulevard Montparnasse never even noticed, in a tiny house which some satirical builder seemed to have improvised as a joke, were woven the threads with which Willi and his people mobilized the free world; for peace and freedom, against war and fascist oppression, for a universal humanistic culture and the salavation of the cultural heritage, against the Nazi book burners, against barbarism. That Münzenberg was one of the leaders of the international movement directed and financed by Moscow was known by many writers, musicians, painters, professors, priests of all confessions, theater and film people, and many other well-known representatives of the intellectual professions, real or pseudo. They knew this and admired Willi all the more; was he not a great example of tolerance and non-partisan attitudes in the struggle for culture, peace and freedom?

Certainly it would have been nonsense to praise Münzenberg as a seductive scamp or to accuse him of preying on the good faith of well-meaning philosophers and naive poets, or of leading them astray by means of unscrupulous trickery. His sole strategem, which he and his collaborators would use on anyone they were determined to win over, was to convince that person that they needed him in particular in the great and arduous struggle. They needed him as a spokesman for the good cause, for an undertaking which was urgent if human lives were to be saved, to fight against delusion in the face of the growing threat to peace and freedom, and, finally, to shake people out of their indifference. If the call came from him, this much admired and esteemed man, the hesitant would awaken. Therefore . . .

Yes, even the famous, who should not require such stroking, have often to be reminded how much they are needed, that thanks only to them everything becomes possible, while without them . . . And the famous figures to whom Münzenberg's organization turned had the feeling that they were being addressed in the name of history, that they were being offered and deserved an important role which could only enhance and solidify their standing in the world. Lest there be any misunderstanding: this was not so much a case of unappeased vanity, or that sickly sweet, monotonous flattery of

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which major figures receive all too much, but rather a call to serve a great ideal, and to stand forth as one of the most virtuous, bravest, and wisest in defending good against evil.

All this explains why the preponderant and best intellectuals in the free countries felt from 1933 on that antifascism had become an essential commitment to themselves and to all values that made human life worth living. Some were antifascist because they had long held leftist views. Others went over to the left because they wanted to combat fascism. Münzenberg's organization, like all the other leagues, clubs and movements directed by the communists, whether openly or surreptitiously, found so many adherents because the words and deeds of the fascists, especially the Nazis, were frightening to a growing number of people.

If it was a question of freedom and the struggle against tyranny, why did the antifascists not wage a similar struggle against Soviet tyranny? Did not the Soviet Union also have a single party, identified with the state, which bowed to a leadership which in turn had to leave all the decisions to a single man, hailed everywhere and at all times as the glorious leader? This question should have become all the more urgent insofar as the so-called proletarian dictatorship consolidated its monolithic character precisely in those years of passionate antifascism and before everyone's eyes turned into Stalin's total despotism.

Nevertheless the maxim still held: "In battle make common front against the foe. Fix your gaze on him alone." Thus after the rise of Hitler the antifascist was allowed to, had to forget Stalin's despotism. Stalin's empire was, after all, the only one on earth which could never turn fascist, because there the class system had been eliminated, we were told, and a socialist country created.

Even the intellectuals with no communist leanings did not object when the manifestos against the fascist fiends to which they put their names contained ever more glowing paeans to the ideal and freedom-loving character of the Soviet Union.

In the autumn of 1935 I became a permanent staff member of the international Comité which from Paris called upon the world's youth to rise up and oppose war and fascism. It had been founded, financed, and led by the Youth Division of the Comintern. Delegates from all nations were to represent those youth organizations that were openly antifascist. I did not, of course, belong to the Youth Division of the Comintern, but they offered me this post because for

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many years I had dealt with questions of youth, not only on the plane of psychology but also on the political plane. If my function was to be essentially that of an advisor, it was taken for granted that I would also assist with the publication of journals, propaganda material, and books. Decisions on all important matters were supposed to rest with the Comintern bureaucracy in Moscow, but in actuality they rested with the Russian members at the highest levels, who were carrying out the orders of Stalin and his closest associates.

The international Comité had a great number of world-famous men and women as patrons, who gave it moral and intellectual support. On its envelopes, journals, and leaflets all the names of the sponsors were printed. I called this roster of names "Münzenberg's rubber stamps."

Most of the Comité's members, chiefly noncommunists, seldom criticized the proposals formulated by the communists. With time these Catholic, Protestant, liberal, and working-class delegates became active sympathizers or even party members. But this had to be kept secret, for these young people were useful only so long as they represented noncommunist organizations.

* * *

No one at that time in possession of his senses, above all no intellectual, to whom all the information was available, had to believe in the truth of the confessions made at the Moscow trials. On the contrary, to anyone with any common sense, a knowledge of the previous life of the defendants, as well as the reading of the official bulletins should have made it clear that these judicial proceedings were not genuine by any stretch of the imagination. No one knew this better than the intellectual communists and sympathizers, who had known for years who these men were and what they had done with their lives. I do not believe anyone who maintains that he did not grasp the truth until twenty years later, after Khrushchev's incomplete admissions.

Then as now intellectuals played a far less significant role in politics than they and their followers imagined. They were and are at best opinion-makers who produce effects in their surroundings not unlike theatrical successes. But the political decisions are made by others. Some of these may be intellectuals who have become professional politicians, but then they behave as such.

One could know, in fact one had to know, that Dachau existed

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and later Auschwitz, that Hitler was bent on conquest and, therefore, prepared for war and wanted to fan it into flames while he was still young enough to lead it personally. One knew that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not governed by soviets, and not by workers and peasants, but by the Communist Party, which meant a tiny group of men who slavishly obeyed a single man who was identified with the nation, the state, and the Party, so that ultimately he was everything, hence the millions of deportations, imprisonments, and witch trials. All this was known to everyone. Everyone could, had to hear about it, insofar as he wanted to.

On January 23, 1937, began the trial against Radek, Piatakow and so many other comrades-in-arms of Lenin and Trotsky. I do not give the other names, for what can they mean to readers who are today forty years old or even younger?

In these show trials the innocent accused themselves of crimes which they had not committed, which were only fabrications. They expiated with their deaths these crimes which had been dreamed up by Stalin and his unimaginative police, and their followers and friends paid with exile and precipitate downfall.

After the last war the delirious anti-Semites spread the rumor that Adolf Hitler had been a Jew, an agent of the Elders of Zion, and on their orders had ruined Germany morally, militarily, and economically. But the charges and confessions at the Moscow trials and at those that were to follow in Sofia, Budapest, and Prague were not less farfetched, and were a no less shameless insult to the intelligence. Yet not only in the communist press but also in countless bourgeois newspapers the world over, one could read articles whose authors testified that the defendants were guilty and that their execution was necessary for the salvation of peace and freedom.

The left had hoped that the first show trial would be the last. Back then, in August 1936, the most significant events were the Spanish Civil War, which had just broken out, and the progress of the Popular Front in France. The new trial appeared all the more horrible. It was not only a question of Radek and his fellow defendants, most of whom were guilty in quite the opposite sense, having repeatedly submitted to Stalin and his clique.

I was less troubled by their account than by my own capitulation, my own double dealing, and was humbled and debased in my own eyes by this ghastly spectacle. Of course I did not for a moment overestimate the importance of what I had done for the movement—

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one member more or less. I or somebody else—it hardly mattered. But insofar as my own past was concerned, I now saw it as an unconscious complicity in a horrible, truth-destroying drive by a tiny power group which had reduced an entire movement to a despicable, cowardly hostage to its own purposes.

When a person becomes his own enemy, he runs the risk of losing all prospects of a future. There now began the most difficult, most threatening phase of my life. I still had many friends, and for the past year I had had Jenka. But there was no one to whom I wanted to confide my trouble. . . .

It was the summer of 1939, not too hot, not too rainy. All of France seemed to have conspired to take its vacation at the same time. Never had such crowds been seen at the seashore, on the river banks, in the mountains, in the valleys, in the sleepy villages. Wars did not break out before autumn, so one had no need to think of any immediate danger. Besides, there was the Soviet Union with its mighty army; all the newspapers and weekly magazines carried reports, complete with pictures. One could admire the parachute regiments, the tanks, and the wonderfully strong, reliable young men as they marched, peace-loving and sure of victory, through Red Square. And even more interesting was the theft of a Watteau painting from the Louvre. The search for the master thief, who had carried off such a coup, kept the vacationers on tenterhooks. There was something uncanny here, because just before the First World War a masterwork had also disappeared from the Louvre, the mysteriously smiling Mona Lisa. Yes, here was something everyone could talk about. It took one's mind off Adolf and his little mustache. . . .

Stalin's betrayal of antifascism released me and many others once and for all from our last investment in communism. Thanks to that betrayal, from August 24, 1939 on we were so free of it that we could regard it with the objectivity of a microbe hunter.

At Münzenberg's request I drew up a program for a new socialist movement and considered the conditions under which it could be established in Germany once Hitler was defeated. None of us doubted the outcome of the war—even with the help Hitler had received from his Russian crony. It was clear on the other hand that France and England would fight seriously only in the West. When Russia launched its raid into Finland, the Allies gesticulated wildly, and threatened to send an expeditionary force to help the little country. But it was empty chatter, contemptible and laughable.

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Malraux had volunteered and was waiting to be called up; he was to be assigned to a tank brigade. He was sure I could be employed to the greatest advantage in the newly created Propaganda Bureau, directed by the diplomat and writer Giraudoux, whose influence was meant to extend far beyond French borders. He intended to recommend me to Giraudoux, who would prize my collaboration, he was sure. Still Malraux indicated that in my place he would want to be with the fighting forces.

When we said goodbye—I was called up before him—we tried to foresee what would happen, but we in no way imagined what was really to occur in May 1940. We promised to write to each other; if direct communication might be cut off some day, Jenka and Josette—that was the name of his life's companion—would take care that we should know how things stood with the other. We did not mention death. Death was present in all of Malraux's writings. But I could easily picture being seriously wounded somewhere and succumbing alone and helpless, abandoned by my comrades, who would be either advancing on the enemy, or fleeing from them.

* * *

No, I have done nothing out of boldness or reckless courage, but only out of the belief that it had to be done, in spite of my vivid sense of the danger to which I thereby subjected myself. So my courage grows out of the overcoming of fear. It is an *in spite of*—as in the time of persecutions the faith of my ancestors was.

At our last meeting, Arthur Koestler gave me a white pill—in case a quick death was the only way out. I kept it in a hidden fold of my wallet. It was lost during the retreat, toward the end of the very night when I feared that the coming day might be my last.

Dogmas, dreams of saving the world, and the blackmail that goes with all this, breed the political paranoia of totalitarian movements. Their members become deaf to reasonable arguments or to the language of facts. This is especially true in a disordered world where it is easier to orient oneself negatively than positively, and one is more inclined to believe that the enemy is dangerous and worthy of extirpation than that one's friend will remain a reliable comrade in arms.

The difficulty of my position, like that of some of those in my circle who shared my views, consisted of this: that we wanted to fight the wrongs but not the people who were wrong. I was careful not to

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identify people with their opinions and not to see an opponent automatically as an enemy. However unrelenting my enmity to all dictators and their lying propaganda, I tried—often enough without success—to see their followers as people who had been led astray, not necessarily enemies. Absolute negativity has always been an abomination to me. I would shrink from a world in which there were only two colors, and these without nuance, as before a dread disease. . . .

* * *

I spoke not far back of the fall of France in the summer of 1940. What happened in the years that followed still overshadows my present existence. What I have written since then has not been read correctly if the reader has failed to discover in it my anguish over what so many innocent people, but especially those of my race, had to suffer.

No one speaks only with his own voice; generations, whose heir and successor he is, speak out of him, even when he is reporting on the banalities of his everyday existence. A person of my race knows that in the second quarter of this century he fell heir to a misfortune that made insignificant all that happened to him as one privileged to survive. No one can decline that heritage, which seizes possession of one before one has even had time to consider whether one should accept it.

We are saddened by the death of
RAYMOND ARON,
a friend and contributor.

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FICTION

Joseph McElroy

THE MAN WITH THE BAG FULL OF BOOMERANGS IN THE BOIS DE BOULOGNE

He was not to be confused with my new friends or my old. He was there before I found him and he did not care about being discovered. I knew him by a thing he did. He threw boomerangs in the Bois de Boulogne. If he heard any of my questions, he kept them to himself. Perhaps we were there to be alone, I in Paris, he in the Bois that sometimes excludes the Paris it is part of.

But what makes you think Paris will still be there when you arrive? inquires a timeless brass plate embedded in the lunchtable and engraved with an accented French name. Well, I'm *in* Paris, after all; that was obvious even before I sat down with my friend who invited me to meet him here, though the immortal name I put my finger on, that frankly I didn't quite place, might have been instead that of the burly American who's also, I'm told, here somewhere staring in brass off a table—far-flung American name once commonly coupled with Paris itself. So now, like a memorial bench in a park, a table bears his name, that fighter who once clued us all in that you make it up out of what you know, or words to that effect. His pen (or sharpened pencil) had more clout even than his knuckles.

What is the name of that famous burly writer who lunched at this consequently famous restaurant? Out there past the brass plaques and dark wood surfaces and the warm glass and the conversation, the city doesn't happen to answer. Not a student descending from a bus; not a woman hurrying by with two shopping bags like buckets; not a man in the street I've seen in many quarters carrying under his arm a very long loaf of bread and once or twice wearing a motorbike helmet. He is probably not the man my French friends patiently hear me describe, who is my man in the Bois whose very face suggests the projectiles he carries in a bag, a cloth bag I didn't

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have to make up, to contain those projectiles in the settled November light of late afternoon in the Bois when I begin my run.

Which man? The man with a bag full of boomerangs, wooden boomerangs one by one, old and nicked and scraped and shaped smooth to the uses of their flight, one or two taped like the business end of a hockey stick. When I arrived, coming down the dirt path toward a great open green, and broke into my jog, he was there. And he was there when I wound my way back three or four miles later, in later light, around me the old cognates of trees, of dusk, of leaves crackling under foot. Yet, veering down hedged paths, past thickets where dogs appear, and piney spaces with signs that say WALK, to surprise a parked car where no car can drive, and across the large, turned-over earth of bridle paths, and around an unexpected chilly pond they call a sea, a lake, that has hidden away for this year its water lilies, I could sometimes lose myself with the deliberateness of the pilgrim runner whose destination is unknown *and* known precisely as his sanctuary is the act of running itself. So I find I am beside the children's zoo, or so close to some mute lawn girdled by traffic thinking its way home that I can plot my peripheral position sensing I am near both the Russian Embassy and the Counterfeit Museum. Or I can't see Eiffel's highly original wind-stressed "tree" anywhere, whereas here's a racecourse again on my right, though this isn't the other racecourse that I know, so now I must be running in the other direction toward Boulevard Anatole France and the soccer stadium. But I am still meditating the famed water jumps of the other racecourse, and turning back in search of the Porte d'Auteil Metro, I breathe the smoke of small fires men and boys feed near the great beech trees.

But most often, I ended where the boomerang-thrower was working his way into the declining light. And passed him, because that was my way back to the Metro. He began low, he aimed each of those bonelike, L shaped, end-over-end handles along some plane of air as if with his exacting eyes he must pass it under a very low bridge out there before it could swoop upward and slice around and back, a tilted loop whose moving point he kept before him pivoting his body with grim wonder and familiarity. As I came near, I would not stop running but I might turn my head, my shoulders, my torso, to try to follow the flight of the boomerang. More than once I felt it behind me, palely revolving, silent as a glider and beyond needing light to cross the private sky of the Bois, which for all its clarity of slope and logical forest is its own shadow and contagion within a me-

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tropolis of illuminations balconied, reflected, glimmering, windowed in the frames of casements. More than once I saw the boomerang land near its intent owner, wood against earth. Sometimes he seemed to be launching the whole bagful before proceeding to retrieve. What was his method? He would pick one boomerang up with another or with his foot. One afternoon I must have been early, I was leaving as he arrived; I wanted to know how he started doing this, because we had boomerangs in Brooklyn Heights before the War in a dead end street looking out from a city cliff to the docks and New York harbor and the Statue, and we hurled our preplastic boomerangs out over the street that ran below that cliff and thought of nothing, not people below, not the windows of apartment houses. I looked this foreign boomerang-thrower in the eye, his the angular face of a hunter looking out for danger, a blue knitted cap, old blue sweatshirt with the hood back like mine. What was he doing off work at four? The things in the bag were alive, their imaginary kite strings resilient.

I come from a city also great, also both beautiful and dark, its people also both abrupt and not distant; and I wanted to (as Baudelaire says) "accost" this boomerang man. However, I could not find the French for what I had to say, remembering that at least in my own language I would know better what I had to say when I began to say it. Once I had lost one of his boomerangs in the dusk, but the man himself seemed not to have lost it, although I never saw it land and I heard a sound in the trees near my head.

The French for all I wanted to say, I found in a dream, and there, I think, it stayed. I lived, during those first weeks, alone, consciously located between the light and darkness of living *with* someone. This person, sometimes mythical, later materialized as if she had never gone away, perhaps because I was the one who had gone. But in those weeks before American Thanksgiving, reaching toward Frost's "darkest evening of the year," dreams found their way to my new door and, unlike the daytime clients of the rare stamp dealer (though his metal plate ENTREZ SANS FRAPPER was all I know of them or him, apart from what I knew of the subject matter of his business, not to mention a slow leak from a water-pressure valve in my kitchen which I heard nothing from him about), my dreams were by contrast both inside my apartment before I knew it and outside knocking like an unknown neighbor in the middle of the night.

At least once during my first dreams, the man with the boomerangs threw them all so that they did not come back. Two

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French friends of mine said he sounded a little crazy (the way in America they say that some poor person is "harmless"). A private citizen was how I took him, a survivor-craftsman testing the air. The boomerangs I dreamt were not some American dream's disposable weapons; my twilight companion's resources proved renewable, his boomerangs reusably old and known; this wasn't some Apache spilling the blood of vowels F. Scott Fitzgerald rendered out of Rimbaud, but a native true to the wood from which the aboriginal implements were cut. I made him up out of what I knew, and I assumed he was too authentic to have time to make me up.

The phone rang and I went out to meet a friend. I checked the Mont St. Michel tides and saw a French child on a train wearing a red University of Michigan sweatshirt. I came out of Chartres Cathedral and went back inside. I returned to the Jeu de Paume to hear American spoken without hesitation or apology and, from within that temple of light and color, to view through my favorite window the gray spirit of the riverbank—its founded harmonies of palace and avenue, whose foreground proved to be where those waterlilies hang, safe-locked in the sister temple of this tennis court, where my three-dimensional, fellow wanderers, refusing to disappear into the "Moulin de la Galette" we're all admiring, crowd about me as if I were my mind. Here, what went up must come down—downstairs, I mean."What gains admission must find exit," they say with justice.

But what goes out—does it come back? I cannot help the signs and symbols; they are as actual as the knocking on my Montmartre door at the moment of my dream when at last I completed the invention of the man with the bag full of boomerangs in the Bois de Boulogne. It was more urgent even than a phone ringing in the middle of the night, that knock at my front door—was it the concierge?—and I must wake from my dream just when I have at last found the French with which to accost the person I have made up. The stamp dealer went home eight hours ago. Who can it be at the door? Well, you can't always choose your time to make the acquaintance of a neighbor. I'm out of bed, croaking, "J'arrive, j'arrive" (pleased to recall the more accurate English), walking half in my sleep through someone else's curtain-insulated rooms to ask in French, "Who's there? What is it?", only to realize I have heard no more knocks, and to suspect that they were not here upon this front door in the pitch-black hall but back in that bedroom where I left the dream. What a way to gain entrance to an apartment! Knock on the

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door at three in the morning until you rouse your prey, then express such concern over the nightmare yells and cries he did not even know were coming out of his sleep, that helplessly he opens the door to thank you.

But that was a New York dream. I found the light; I sat on my bed and remembered hearing the French I needed in order to address the boomerang-thrower, only in my dream fluency to pass to a stage in which *he* spoke to *me*. Till all the interference in my solitary situation left me in that empty apartment, and the sounds of knocking that had brought me stumbling through rooms I hardly knew faded from me with the French I had found but now lost, though not its sense.

For the boomerang man from the Bois had told me what I could not have learned had I not already known it: that if it was worth telling, it was worth keeping secret, how he shied those pieces of himself down into the late autumn, his aim at some distance from him, his boomerangs quarrying not prey but chance which was to cast that old and various loop beyond routine success, dreaming the while of a point where at its outward limit the path's momentum paused upon a crest of stillness and by the logic of our lunatic hope did not return. In this way, although he will not hear me, he is still there when I go, and here when I come back.

Yet if this is unbelievable, I tried something more down-to-earth. One cold afternoon I spoke; I approached the man and said in French that I had not seen a boomerang thrown "since" thirty years. He answered. He had been throwing them that long and longer, he said. I asked if he had hunted with them. He looked me up and down, his eyebrows raised, his forehead wrinkled. He had not, he said. And were these the same old boomerangs he had always used? Only this one, he said, raising the one in his hand. Speaking for all of us, I asked if his aim was accurate, though not having the French noun for "aim" (which proves to be *but*), I asked if, when he threw (*lancé*) he was *toujours exact*. In English, then, he said, "American?" We smiled briefly; we nodded. "You jog," he said slowly, "I throw boomerangs."

"I used to throw a boomerang as a child," I said in French.

He was looking downrange, shaking the boomerang in his hand downward at arm's length, first one big shake, then a series of diminishing shakes. "Moi aussi," I heard him say.

Like a knife-thrower pointing at his target, he launched his toy. Like a passerby, I continued on my way.

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Rudolf M. Krueger

SHE WANTED STRAWBERRIES AND LOVE

"This is a true story and contains nothing but the truth."

We were coming back exhausted from tree cutting. The sun was already below the horizon. It was getting cool, though it was just the end of July. We had picked and eaten strawberries as we worked and even filled our mess pots. There might be the possibility of swapping some for a piece of bread.

Nobody had to be brought back on a stretcher today. Yesterday was different. The Slovin brothers had been crushed to death by a falling tree. And only two days ago, Geranin, while chopping a giant cedar, suddenly seized his heart and fell dead. The guards, after their usual " . . . a step to the left, a step to the right, will be seen as an attempt to escape—and weapons will be used without warning . . . ," continued to talk to each other. Zyedinsh, walking along beside me, even sang to himself in a weak hoarse voice:

> And so into the evening late
> While cutting, sawing, stacking trees
> We glare hatefully at the moon
> And curse our dreadful, hopeless fate.

We approached the guardhouse of *Prizhim,* our concentration camp located near the little Ural town of Solikamsk. We went through the usual *shmon,* the search, and entered the zone. We quickly went past our barracks heading straight for the mess hall to fetch our bread and *balanda*—a watery turnip soup.

She stopped me as I went past the womens' barracks and said in broken Russian, "Let me have your strawberries and I'll give you my bread."

"How much bread?" I asked.

She suddenly switched over to German. "My whole day's ration. The crusty end. Wait for me behind the corner of my barracks." She came back in a few minutes, handed me her bread,

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Editor's Note: Translated from the Russian by J. Gregory Oswald.

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and started greedily with her fingers to transfer the strawberries from my pot to her earthenware bowl.

I looked at her—so very, very thin, a long neck, a wrinkled but clean dress, big, grey eyes, and light brown hair. She became embarrassed. "Don't look at me; I so much want strawberries. I know you're from Riga. I'm from Tallin . . . from the ballet. Like you, since June 1941 . . . a year and a month, already. Now, a clean-up girl in the dispensary."

"What are you in for?" I asked.

"And you?" she answered, smiling. "I am a 'socially dangerous element,'" she added with irony, popping some unwashed strawberries in her mouth.

"I've got to hurry off for my soup," I said through my teeth.

"Bring some strawberries, again. Just don't come into our barracks— there's such an awful stink there. I'll wait for you at the corner." She smiled a pitiable smile and slowly trudged toward her barracks pressing the bowl to her breast.

"I'll bring some more, tomorrow!" I shouted after her and dashed off.

The next day we returned from woodcutting without strawberries. The guards had not allowed us to pick any. She was waiting for me behind the corner of the barracks.

"Don't be sorry," she said. "Here, take half of my bread. I don't really care for it anyhow. You'll bring some berries next time. Let's talk now for awhile. I enjoy chatting with you, for some reason."

I took the bread. I wanted so much to eat. Suddenly, I felt ashamed that I was so dirty, that my head was shaved, that I had on this torn, wet, wadded jacket—it had rained that day.

"Tell me about Riga, about your life there. I've been there many times. What's your name? Mine's Edith. I'm twenty-two."

"I'm Rudolf—Rudy," I said, and chatted on about my mother, my sister, and my little nephew.

She listened quietly. "You must be very tired," she interrupted. "Go and get some rest and may God be with you. Until tomorrow . . ."

I brought her strawberries two other times. After that there were no more. But we continued to meet every evening. I looked forward to seeing her. I kept telling her about my life. She pressed close to me as she listened. She herself spoke very little, as though it might be difficult for her. Once she even kissed me on the cheek.

In August it became colder with frequent rains.

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"You know . . . and don't interrupt. . . ." she whispered one evening. It was dark, and a soft rain was falling.

"I feel my days are numbered. I don't really want to live . . . be quiet . . . hear me out. I'll be fine over there. I'll be with my father. They shot him. And I'll be with my mother. She died when I was a baby." "But, you know," she went on almost inaudibly, "I'm so glad that I had a chance to eat my favorite berries—that I met you.

"Now, listen to me carefully. The day after tomorrow is Saturday. They will take you all to the bathhouse. After that, you come to the guardhouse at the camp entrance. I know who's on duty Saturday night. I managed to hide a pair of silk stockings. For those they will let us have fifteen minutes in the back corridor of the guardhouse." She glanced away. "I want to make love once before I die. And now, for heaven's sake, don't say anything . . . just go. We'll meet day after tomorrow."

My head spinning, I ran to my barracks and threw myself on the slats of my wooden bunk. I couldn't sleep. I thought and thought, remembering that awful night of June 1941, a year ago. Seven NKVD agents came to arrest me. Their search went on all night. From that time on I seemed to be living in a bad dream . . . the interrogation . . . my refusal to sign a false confession . . . a blow on the head . . . solitary confinement. Maybe I should have signed . . . it would have brought an end to my misery—a firing squad. Then came deportation to a concentration camp.

"Sentence by Special Decree," issued there five months later without so much as an investigation or trial.

Tree cutting, exhausting tree cutting. Death—death every day—death to my comrades of misfortune. Here was no thought of love or women.

"Would I be able . . . would I disappoint her?"

"Drink it. Don't get excited."

We are in the narrow corridor of the guardhouse. She hands me a tiny flask. I put it to my lips. It's pure alcohol.

"Lay your jacket on the floor . . ."

Now my head is really spinning. I seize her. We drop to the floor. I pull up her skirt. She has nothing under it. I kiss her dry lips . . . her eyes remain open as she looks into mine . . .

No more than ten minutes pass. She gets up. "Thank you . . . thank you, my dear . . ." she whispers, kissing my brow. "I'll go now. You leave in a few minutes."

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She was not there the next day or the day after. "Tomorrow," I decided, "I'll disregard her wish and go into the women's barracks."

The next morning, after roll call, the lame kitchen helper, Vitaly, came up to me. "You know," she said, "last night I buried nine people, and one of them was your girl. Oh, she was so thin." I didn't answer. I turned away.

Long hard years went by. Somehow I survived. Often, very often, I see in my dreams strawberries . . . the floor of the damp, dirty corridor of the guardhouse . . . and her big, sad eyes.

Coming in

PARTISAN REVIEW

- New directions in modern thought edited by Daniel Bell
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- Mark Shechner on Wilhelm Reich
- Ronald Hayman: *New Light on Brecht*
- Diana Pinto on Raymond Aron
- Andrei Siniavski: *The Joke Inside the Joke*
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Darina Silone

THE LAST HOURS OF IGNAZIO SILONE

Oh God, give each one his own death.
Rilke

The afternoon of Thursday, August 17, 1978, he went out for his usual walk in the garden of the clinic, along paths that wound through expanses of lawn bordered by rosebeds. Tall shady trees enclosed the garden and beyond them rose the peak of Mount Salève, which in that season was no longer snowcapped. He walked securely, without the black stick—a present from the caretaker of the house in Rome—on which he had been dependent for years.

It was a fresh summer day, the Alpine air invigorating, yet the sun was hot enough to make us seek a bench in the shade.

"Today I'm in a mood for talking," he said as we sat down. "I'm worried about your health, for one thing."

Not for thirty-four years had he ever raised this subject, not until the last five months of his life, in Geneva, where he spoke of it often.

"Don't worry about me. I'm all right, except for this wretched hand. It's you who've got to concentrate on getting well. You're looking so much better than a year or even six months ago, I hardly recognize you."

"Yes, I do feel better. I never thought it possible. I'd be very comfortable here if it weren't for all that tiresome treatment."

"But it's the correct treatment, at long last."

"I realize that. Then of course there's the doctor. I've come across many doctors in my life but never one like him. And to think that he sends me flowers! I can't stay here forever, though. Besides, it must cost quite a bit. Are you paying all the bills?"

"Naturally."

"There's nothing owing?"

"Nothing, I assure you. I manage. Leave these problems to me and don't worry." (He had always had a horror of finding himself old

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and ill and unable to pay his medical expenses. Fortunately, he never knew that this was precisely what had happened.)

"But I have to worry."

"All right. If you could give me the manuscript of *Severina* to be typed and sent to the publishers, it might help."

"But it's ready. I'm just revising it. You know I can never stop revising. If you insist on taking it now, all right, but I'd rather keep it for another couple of weeks. I've often told you that my ideal would be to write and rewrite the same book all my life, as Manzoni did."

"Can't I help you somehow? You used to say I could, when I telephoned from Rome."

"Perhaps then, not now. Leave it to me. By the way," he said, lowering his voice, "when are they going to operate on me? After all, I do have to go home some day."

"I don't know," I said. "Why don't you ask the doctor? He has always forbidden me to interfere. You trust him, don't you?"

"Yes, of course, otherwise I'd have gone back long ago. Here everything is very pleasant, but that's not the point. Basically I feel cured already, but that operation . . . They explained it to me, they convinced me it was necessary, what are they waiting for?"

I knew that any hope expected of the operation had vanished on April 27 with the first sign of brain damage, the result of a medical error made the previous October. I thought the doctor had told him this: he never deceived his patients. I certainly had no authority to explain.

"At home you'll find the housework tiring, now that Phoenician Marie is gone," he said. (This was what he used to call our devoted old Sardinian maidservant, who had died four days before we set out for Geneva in March 1978.) "But since I'll be well again, I'll help you."

"I've heard those promises before. But don't think about the housework now, just try to get well."

"It's strange: I've always been wary of the surgeon's knife and I'm grateful for having been spared it so far, in spite of all that has happened to me. But now I have no fears. I just want to be cured."

"I've been through it several times, as you know. There's nothing to it, really. You don't feel anything, and later, when you come out of the anesthetic, you know you're never again going to suffer all those pains and upsets that were disrupting your life, and then while you're convalescing everyone makes a fuss of you."

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It was horrible: I was putting on an act.

"Oh, I know there's a risk: one in a hundred, they told me that. I hope I'll get away with it. But I have no fear of dying, only of not being conscious when the moment comes. It's the last moment of life, the most solemn of all: I don't want to miss it. My only fear is that when I'm dead the wolves will devour you."

"What wolves are you talking about? I've never seen any except in the zoo."

"Wolves in human form," he answered gravely. I wanted to hear more but couldn't probe, and he remained silent. Then his eyes took on the distant look he had when recalling sad, far-off things.

"In those freezing nights after the earthquake one could hear the wolves howling, each time a little closer," he said. "You know, even outside the ruins many people had died in the snow. The *bersaglieri* hadn't yet arrived from Rome with their bayonets, which were hardly suitable for excavating anyhow. By day I tried digging with my hands in the rubble, but all I could see were the large fallen beams. Lower down, beyond the river, the houses were still standing. My cousin F. lived there. Other cousins, hastily sent back from military service, pitched a huge tent in the open space outside the house. When darkness fell, relatives and friends brought straw pallets and blankets for the night. From time to time there would be a new tremor, nothing like the first, but how was one to know? Then everybody rushed into the open. One night I couldn't face the cold outside and pretended to be asleep. I heard one of my uncles saying I must be wakened, then someone else replying, "Let him sleep, he's better dead, since he's got no one left."

"Who said that?" I asked.

"What does it matter?"

"But you still had your brother."

"They assumed he was dead, buried under the ruins, but actually my mother was the only one in the whole family who was killed by the earthquake."

"You never told me the story of the tent."

"It's one of many sad memories that I've tried in vain to forget. It came back to me now as I reflected that, for good or ill, I've reached the age of seventy-eight. Who would have thought it possible? Yes, they found my brother alive after five days, with a broken shoulder. He was a sturdy youngster and made a quick recovery. But our home was lost and we were never again to live under the

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same roof. The orphans left by the earthquake were dispersed among various charitable organizations, so that we were sent to two different boarding schools in Rome. Romolo was beginning the five years of middle school while I had just the three years of high school ahead of me. As his elder brother and his only close relative, I felt I had to help and protect him. But he was still at high school in 1921 when I became a communist. At first we managed to keep in contact but after fascism took over and drove the Communist Party underground, things became more difficult for us. To meet me would have been too dangerous. Letters were censored when not actually confiscated, and we certainly couldn't mention politics. I remember one of his letters from the time of his military service, full of pride because he had won an athletic contest for his regiment and his colonel had congratulated him."

"Did he take any interest in politics?"

"He was antifascist of course, but not a member of any party, at least not then. If only he had been, if only he had consciously accepted the risks of resistance work from the beginning, the weight of my responsibility would have been less terrible to bear. Instead he was thwarted in everything because of me, and by then I was mostly abroad. Just imagine, when he should have been taking his final high school exams, the police locked him up for the crucial five days. 'And I assure you I'd studied hard,' he wrote to me. I advised him to learn printing, and he did, but he was constantly harassed by the police and could get no regular work. It was clear that he had no future in Italy. He had become engaged to a girl from Velletri and would have liked to marry and settle down, but without a steady job he couldn't hope to do so. I therefore suggested that he leave Italy and continue his studies at the Zurich Polytechnic, which was his dream. I would have managed it somehow or other."

"But could you really have supported him?"

"Later on, when Romolo was in prison, I worked on building sites so that he could have better food and warm clothes, though I knew he would never get even half the money. To keep him at the Polytechnic would not have been difficult. But you know all this, why am I telling it to you now?"

"I knew only bits and scraps. You never talked much about it. I can understand why. Like Agostino."

"Agostino?"

"Are you forgetting the characters of your own novels?

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Agostino was the political refugee in *The Fox and the Camellias* who talked to his friends about anything except the fact that his brother had died in prision."

"I didn't know you read my books so attentively."

"Didn't you? Well, how did Romolo react to your proposal? Did he worry about his fiancée?"

"Perhaps he thought she could join him later on. At any rate, he agreed enthusiastically. He was so naive, so unaware of the precautions required by underground politics, that before setting out he went back to our village to say goodbye to friends and relatives. He acted mysteriously but everyone guessed. From then on, naturally, the police never lost sight of him until he was arrested."

"How could he possibly have crossed the frontier?"

"I had to get him forged documents with the help of my communist friends. It was his first contact with the Party and he may have felt attracted to it, partly on my account, partly because of the comradeship, not knowing that I was already in the process of leaving. He always had a strong sense of social injustice, but of course knew nothing of Stalin's intrigues. I had no means then of knowing anything definite, but if he did join the Party, as some people said, it can only have been later on, in prison. He was certainly never a leader nor even an activist. No trained communist would have carried an incriminating piece of paper on his person, as Romolo did. But three years later, at his trial, when accused of being a communist, he confessed to it, writing to me afterwards, 'I tried to conduct myself as I thought you would have done in my place.' It was heartbreaking because by then I had broken with the Party for good. But I admired his courage and I hope that in prison his new faith may have been of some comfort to him."

"You've told me that part of it before."

"I was in Paris, imagining Romolo safe in Switzerland, when I learned from newspaper headlines that my brother had been arrested on the charge of attempted regicide. Imagine that! With the help of friends I instantly organized a press campaign to enlist public opinion on Romolo's behalf. The Italian consul general in Paris refused our plea to make an affidavit testifying what we knew to be true. The press campaign did save Romolo from the firing squad, at least in theory. In fact no one ever believed that absurd charge, because the attempt on the King's life was almost certainly plotted by a fanatically antimonarchist group of fascists—*squadristi*—as a

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pretext for arresting many antifascists. They wouldn't have shot Romolo, they wanted to force names out of him under torture. Courage apart, Romolo didn't know any names; he had nothing to reveal. He refused to explain how that sketch of a *piazza* in Como happened to be in his pocket, for fear of compromising the stranger who was to have given him the false identity papers there. So he kept silent, except for repeating that he wasn't an assassin. If he had confessed at once that he was trying to cross the frontier with a false passport, perhaps they wouldn't have tortured him, perhaps they wouldn't have sentenced him to twelve years of imprisonment, the first three 'under special custody.' Romolo might still be alive, were it not for me."

"It wasn't your fault."

"No, but it was because of me that he died, aged twenty-eight, guilty only of being my brother. With several police warrants out against me, it would have been senseless to return to Italy. I could try to help him only from abroad. But I could do nothing to prevent the inhuman tortures inflicted by the police. I came to know about them only much later. After the sentence, it was a little easier for him to receive books, and he worked out a serious plan of study: history, economics, philosophy, literature. But for some reason, I can't think why, he was not allowed to learn French. When I managed to send him the Italian classics he had asked me for, I remember his writing to me, not long before the end, 'With the greatest Italian poets for company and all the time in the world to read them, I am really to be envied and you must not worry about me.' Just think, he guessed at my despair for him and was trying to console me. His lungs had been destroyed by floggings, cold, and hunger, and shortly after that he died of tuberculosis."

"You have always kept that sketch of the Procida jail in your room in Rome. You never thought of going to Procida?"

"I was determined that when I returned from exile I would not go back to Abruzzo without Romolo's ashes. In October 1944, in Rome, I made inquiries at once. But a few days before Christmas I was told that in 1941 Romolo's remains had been thrown into a common grave. So I no longer had any reason to go to Procida; there was nothing for me to bring back."

"A few days before that Christmas we were married, and you didn't tell me."

He became silent for a while, then he answered, "The loss of

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my mother in the earthquake was traumatic, but it had been caused by a natural catastrophe. My brother's imprisonment and death have never ceased to torture me because but for me they would never have happened. That's why I've spoken so little about Romolo. It's not the kind of grief that's easy to communicate."

"I know."

"Finally I decided to write something about Romolo, to try to establish the truth and to leave some record of his sacrifice. But the task was so painful for me that I kept postponing it. I thought I'd do it after finishing *Celestino.* But after *Celestino* I could never tackle another book. What was wrong I didn't know. They told me I had arteriosclerosis of the brain and must resign myself to it. Yet I still had five or six books in my head to write. Now I know it was the undiagnosed kidney disease and the brain-poisoning that it caused. So many years lost! I feel I could write them now. But in case I don't survive, will you write them for me?"

"I write your books!" I exclaimed. "How could I?"

"You could. I am not talking about novels but about documents. I had been preparing them for years, collecting material. I'm anxious that certain facts, certain experiences should not go unrecorded. You must set them down, if I am not able to do it. Promise me?"

"I promise to try, but it won't be necessary because you will write them yourself," I said, to escape from this melancholy discussion, although I wished he could have told me more.

"And then—this is important—you must retrieve a whole mass of material: manuscripts and typescripts, some never published in Italian, first editions long out of print, different versions of certain novels, books, articles, and so forth, all of which I lent someone, over a period of years, forgetting to ask for them back. You know the state I had got into, letting things slide. It's all a vital part of my archive, the one thing I have to bequeath to posterity: the raw material of a writer's work."

"Of course," I said, "I'll see to it." (A fruitless attempt, it proved to be.) But my thoughts were elsewhere.

The doctor had told me the truth. The operation they at first considered possible would now involve too great a risk. So the patient could never return to Rome; he would always have to remain in the clinic and follow his daily therapy. On that condition, he might perhaps still live for several years. Many writers had had to spend their last years in clinics or sanatoria, continuing to write. It

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was not unthinkable. As soon as he had finished *Severina* he could explain to me, one by one, the other books he intended writing and tell me where to find the material. It was fortunate that he liked the clinic and was attached to the doctor. Constantly supplied with oxygen, sleeping almost upright, as no one had thought of advising him to do before, he was no longer racked by coughing; the disease of his bronchial tubes could never be cured but, being permanently disinfected, they no longer troubled him. And his kidneys, five months earlier invisible on the x-ray, had regained their function "to a spectacular degree," as the doctor would write later in his report. Already the nurses were scanning the advertisement columns of the *Tribune de Genève*, to find me a furnished room or a cheap flat, so that I might settle in Geneva, returning to Rome only now and then, to search for books and documents or deal with bureaucratic matters. (How all this could be managed financially was not immediately apparent.)

"Shall we go indoors?" he said. "The time for recreation is over. I must get back to work."

That afternoon's conversation was to be the last. I do not think he had any premonition; it was nevertheless strange that he should have talked at such length about things he normally kept to himself.

That evening—the last—we dined together as usual, eating the quite different dishes prescribed for our respective diets. We looked at the news on French television. He smiled with pleasure at seeing President Pertini, an old friend, on holiday in the Dolomites. Not finding any other program of interest, he decided to go to bed early, turning the light off about nine. Only then did I leave and telephone, as arranged, the Italian vice consul, who took me back to his house for an hour or two with his family. I had refused their invitation to dine because if Silone had wanted to stay awake until midnight, as often happened, I would not have left him alone.

Returning late to the clinic, I went upstairs and listened at the outer door, then closed it behind me while opening the inner door; the patient was sleeping peacefully. I went to my ground floor room and fell asleep.

The next day, Friday, August 18, when I went up at seven o'clock to say good morning, I found him cheerful, smiling, pen in hand, sorting notes. When I returned for breakfast at eight he had already shaved, cutting his chin slightly. At this meal he could have

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what he pleased; he particularly enjoyed croissants, which he ate while feigning pity for me as he eyed my solitary unsalted biscuit.

The day before, in the garden, he had limped slightly because his shoes hurt him, and I had insisted on making an appointment for him with a chiropodist. The chiropodist came punctually at nine and went to work skillfully while Silone read the *Journal de Genève,* the first paper to arrive. The *Corriere della Sera* and *Le Monde* followed a little later. But Silone grew annoyed with me because the pedicure was delaying his morning therapeutic program. I had forgotten that twice weekly a young physiotherapist came to teach him breathing exercises, and Friday was one of her days. During these exercises he couldn't even read the papers, and he was exasperated because he was in a hurry to get to work. He smiled at the physiotherapist, but he sulked and was furious with me.

The chiropodist and the physiotherapist took so long, it was now well past the time for the daily intravenous drip that kept his kidneys disinfected. "Oh, not today, it's too much," he pleaded when the nurse brought the apparatus, but he had to give in. He managed to read the newspapers during the hour-long drip, holding them in whichever hand he was free to move. He smiled at the nurse every time she came in to control the slow passage of the serum. That day it was the head nurse, a splendid girl from Berlin, tall, blonde, slender, efficient. Now and again he joked with her in German, as he did in Spanish with the Spanish nurses. But because of the appointment with the chiropodist that had upset his day, I was the scapegoat, and he refused to talk to me.

As soon as the drip was over, the doctor arrived. I went out into the corridor. This was an iron rule which I understood and respected: I was not to be present during the doctor's visits, and forbidden to repeat to the patient anything the doctor said to me. This time I should have liked a word with him afterwards, to know how to react if the question of the operation should arise again. But he was in a hurry and just made a gesture indicating that there was nothing new. I went back into the room. A maid was serving lunch. The sulkiness continued. I cast around for some way to dispel it.

"Did you read the poem in yesterday's *Journal de Genève*?" I asked.

"The Pléiade sonnet on the heat of Rome in August? Yes, I read it. Was it as hot as that now?"

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"Every bit as hot as four centuries ago. Just think of my sufferings down there, struggling with income tax and insurance, while you were enjoying this lovely climate."

I was pleased: the sulking seemed to be over, and he had unknowingly passed my little test. He took three newspapers every day. Sometimes I wondered whether he really read them or merely glanced at the headlines. But he had even read the poem.

Then we watched the French television news. President Pertini was in Rome to attend, with other representatives of the Italian state and government, a requiem Mass for Pope Paul VI in the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels. Silone followed the scene with evident interest, remarking jokingly that the President's life was indeed a hard one: he could not even enjoy his holidays in peace.

The patient would not take his usual short siesta. Last night he had slept enough, he said, which was true. He was in a hurry to return to his manuscript and seemed to concentrate on it intensely. After tea (served at the usual clinic hour of 2 p.m.) I reminded him about his walk. Again the day was beautiful but, for the first time, he refused.

"I'm too busy," he said. "I must finish *Severina.* You yourself told me so."

"Not at the cost of sacrificing your walk. Don't overdo it."

"Let me alone, the walk can be taken tomorrow, twice over if you wish, but today I'm not going."

It was useless to insist. I went out to stretch my legs and mail some letters. Half an hour later I was back again, dealing with my correspondence, slowly and painfully because of my injured hand. (A garbled version of Silone's illness and predicament had leaked into the world press, and I had many letters to answer.)

The telephone rang. He signalled to me to answer it. A Geneva acquaintance was inquiring about his health. She spoke English to me. I tried to cut her short without offending her. Silone did not know English (he had always resisted my attempts to teach him), and it always irritated him to hear me speak this language which eluded him. I was on tenterhooks: the caller, unaware, rattled on. At last I got rid of her, but his sulkiness had come back.

We both continued to write, in silence.

The afternoon wore on: it was about five o'clock when I saw him put the manuscript aside, take other sheets of blank paper, think a while, then begin to write fast, pause, and start again even faster, while his face lit up, as if he were in a state of ecstasy. He did not

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notice that I was watching him. He wrote several pages, with increasing rapidity and an unforgettable look of exaltation on his face.

Punctually at six a maid brought dinner—only for him. Mine would come later. I told him not to wait for me, to eat while the food was hot.

"I don't want to eat at all," he said, furious at being interrupted. He was usually a good patient and followed his schedule. He got up from the armchair and sat on the edge of the bed in front of the trolley. He had been served curried veal with rice, which the day before I had advised him to choose from his special menu. He had remarked, "Oh, your India!" an allusion to my interest in that country. I had replied that there would be nothing Indian about the curry, but that it might make the dish more appetizing.

Then with an abrupt change of mood towards me, he said, "No, I can't eat, I want to wait for you." I answered that perhaps I should be served last, someone had to be last, he had better begin. He began slowly, reluctantly, hardly tasting the food, constantly pausing to say, "I want to wait for you." I told him I wasn't hungry and that he needn't bother, but he put down his fork.

When finally my dinner came, I didn't notice it. He had very carefully pushed the table away from him, raising it slightly to avoid the television cable. I didn't understand.

"Do you need anything? Can I help you?"

He did not answer. Taking care not to upset anything, he very deliberately turned himself around to sit, erect, in the armchair. I watched him, motionless. It was like the performance of a solemn ritual. In a loud voice, slowly and clearly, declaiming the words, he said, "*Maintenant c'est fini. Tout est fini. Je meurs.*" He put his hands to his temples and groaned four times, "Ohh—ohh—ohh—ohh." Then he closed his eyes and collapsed in the armchair. I called him desperately, but he did not respond. I couldn't believe it, and yet I had to believe it. I should have liked some last personal word but realized that he had given it: "I want to wait for you."

Ignazio Silone had succeeded, by a supreme effort, in dying as he wanted: with dignity and in full awareness.

That he should have spoken, at the moment of death, a language not his own, was a phenomenon, the doctor told me, unique in his experience.

After the cerebral lesion which had put an end (at about 6:30 p.m. on August 18, 1978) to his conscious existence, he fell into a coma. He seemed to be immersed in a quiet, untroubled sleep. He

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opened his eyes only once and looked at his doctor who had called him by name. At 4:15 a.m. on August 22, 1978, his heart stopped beating. Faithful to a promise made many years earlier, I stood by his lifeless body and recited the Lord's Prayer.

* * *

To his publishers, to me, to any friend who visited him in the summer of 1978, he said the same thing: that *Severina* was almost finished. Everyone was convinced of it, some more than others (my doubts kept increasing), because he himself was convinced. He could relate or discuss the novel but could not write it down. The mounting pile of manuscripts on his table contained the early chapters, other long passages, the ending, notes of various kinds, all written before April 27, 1978. Everything written after that date was indecipherable.

I quote from a medical dictionary: "*Agraphia:* incapacity to express thoughts in writing due to a lesion of the cerebral cortex. Even if the patient retains or retrieves the ability to form single letters and words, he will be unaware that their combination is meaningless."

When, long afterwards, I found the courage to look at the pages he had written in such haste, with a beatific expression, that last afternoon, I saw that he had at last regained his normal handwriting and that all the words were legible. They seemed to express a feeling of joy. One could understand their meaning—almost.

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Diana Pinto

IS THERE HOPE IN ECONOMIC STAGNATION? FRANCE REASSESSED

Three major French essays appeared during 1982, assessing France's social and economic prospects in a new climate of anxiety. When Mitterrand came to power, Left and Right alike stressed the fact that a new era of French political life had begun. Today one is struck, in reading François de Closets's *Toujours Plus!*, Michel Albert's *Le Pari Français,* and Alain Minc's, *L'après-crise est commencé,* by their total indifference to the political "watershed" of May 1981. Their principal reference is the international historical caesura of the early 1970s: the end of the economically dynamic postwar period with the collapse of the Breton Woods accords and the Kippur War. The heated debates between Left and Right over such controversial campaign issues as nationalizations, Communist participation in power, and universal lay education, have given way to one gloomy consensus: France is in a period of economic stagnation which can no longer be called a "crisis" because the tunnel, at whose end the proverbial light awaits, promises to be a long one.

Current evaluations of France center around three major problems: the rising number of unemployed (over two million), France's catastrophic foreign balance of trade, and the crisis of the French welfare state, in a no-growth economy. These familiar problems are further compounded by what is considered to be a uniquely French *peste:* the existence of a vast, nationally accepted network of middle level privileges which make France one of the more falsely egalitarian countries of Western industrialized democracies, not *despite* but precisely *because* of its revolutionary tradition of *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité.*

France's economic and social problems would normally remain within the purview of specialists alone were it not for the fact that they have become the central topic for essays directed at a far wider public. Closets's, Albert's, and Minc's essays reveal a new *état d'âme* which has developed in the context of economic crisis and which seeks to fuse economic realism and even pessimism with social innovation and optimism. This *état d'âme* is based on three separate reflections: a thoroughly negative assessment of France's economic realities, constraints, and potential in an era of fierce international

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competition. A major critique of France's social inequalities, privileged groups, and protected sectors, defined in profoundly new terms which eschew the old ideological division between "capitalists" and "workers," *les "gros" et les "petites";* and a paradoxical optimism based on the fact that France's major economic and social constraints will force her to become more innovative and flexible, thus fulfilling through austerity some of the 1968 dreams of prosperity.

François de Closets's *Toujours Plus!* is a scathing critique of French society's many privileged castes, written by an essayist and journalist with left-wing sympathies. The book has become in a few months a major best-seller and a "bomb," and its author has been interviewed by the press and invited to appear in numerous television programs. Closets dares to go beyond the ritual attacks on France's *rentier* castes, whether notaries or liberal professionals, to show that it is the vast number of small and middle-level privileged such as the civil servants, bank employees, public sector employees, and super-protected unionized groups which cost most to society. These groups earn considerably more than their technical salary through a vast array of nonmonetary advantages won largely in the 1960s and no longer compatible with France's current low productivity. In Closets's analysis, this system of privileges has only one equivalent, albeit of different intensity, the Soviet *nomenklatura.* The second book, *Le pari français,* written by Michel Albert, is the quintessential voluntarist "bible" of a French high civil servant who, after drawing the bleakest possible portrait of France's economic condition, proceeds to wax lyrical over French society's capacity to solve its unemployment. The solution according to Albert lies in widely spread part-time work, and a change of collective life styles. Albert was *commissaire général au plan* toward the end of Giscard's presidency, but he belongs to that small group of leading technocrats who administer and analyze France regardless of who is in power. The third book, Alain Minc's *L'après-crise est commencé,* is the work of a prominent *enarque* close to Rocard and the trade union, *Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail,* who entered the private sector at Saint Gobain Pont à Mousson, to find himself in the leading ranks of a newly nationalized giant. Minc draws the most ambitious portrait of France's new look in the decades to come, basing it on a nearly Copernican revolution in the respective roles of the state, the market economy, and civil society. For Minc, the state should become an industrial shield for France's international economic ventures, while

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the market mechanism should instead apply to the realm of civil society, finally torn away from the fangs of the state, and left free to develop according to its own spontaneous (and of course positive) rhythms. The old economic sector will, on the other hand, gradually lose its postwar prominence in a no-growth economy.

The criticisms leveled against the Giscardian *septennat,* Mitterrand's first year in office, France's economic and social structural priorities, as well as the search for social innovation protect these three authors from accusations that they are right-wingers unfavorable to the regime in power. (Only an increasingly marginalized Communist Party in search of some new identity indulges in such attacks, but to its own detriment.) Closets's, Albert's and Minc's ideas will count in contemporary French intellectual and political debates and will comprise one of its more interesting chapters since the end of the war. More importantly, the theses of these three books constitute a new left-wing intellectual "space," reminiscent of the old *rocardisme*, which seeks to maintain a reformist, modern, and open left-wing vision intact beyond the political vicissitudes and ideological mistakes of the Socialists in power, and beyond the bleakness of the economy.

In the 1970s it was fashionable to talk about France's new economic dynamism which had catapulted her into the "major league" of the most advanced industrialized countries through its nuclear armaments, automobile, and banking sectors. Today instead, anguish has replaced euphoria, as technocrats like Albert wonder whether France may not be going down the same path of the catastrophic 1930s, when she closed herself to the world and let others bypass her technologically and industrially, while carrying out ambitious and ill-timed social reforms. Albert fights hard against the blindness of the 1930s and accuses the Giscard regime of having failed to realize (perhaps for political reasons) that the economic crisis was not conjunctural but deeply embedded. But he also accuses the Socialists of having carried out dangerous reforms such as the thirty-nine hour legislation which can seriously hamper French productivity and, therefore, its chances of economic survival. For Albert, France still has a fighting chance if she drops all Malthusian analyses, unrealistic ideological projects, and wills herself to enter the new technological age of automation, computers, and advanced industrial production.

Minc shares no such hope. For him, France and the rest of

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Europe is entering the margins of the present world economy, which has just shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific in Braudelian terms. Like Venice in the seventeenth century, France has been overtaken by the Antwerp and London of the new Pacific countries. There is nothing which can be done to fight against this inexorable trend but to accept it and to look increasingly for *social* solutions to economic problems. Minc joins Albert in stressing that with the end of postwar growth, economics as a reference value and as an intellectual discipline has failed, sinking in front of the double problem of inflation and unemployment in a world of "crazy subsystems." Both authors point out that even at the height of its postwar economic boom, the French economy created at most 200,000 jobs annually. In a far more negative international context, there is no economic solution with which to absorb two million unemployed.

Rather than looking pragmatically for other economic solutions or tinkering with available tools, these French thinkers have abandoned the purely economic sphere altogether in what can be construed as a return to a classic, French posture which always considered economics as "base." Indeed it is significant that all three authors stress the degree to which France never had an economic *humus,* and that Frenchmen fail to think as *homo economicus* in a culture which always eschewed political and economic liberalism, and feared the notion of the marketplace while favoring grandiose economic projects destined to bolster the political visions of Louis XIV's descendents. In Closets's, Albert's, and Minc's work the old arguments linked to France's archaic economic mentality are resurfacing after a decade of being considered outdated. In a similar vein, France's distance from the United States is once more measured in terms of a growing abyss. Albert stresses the extent to which America has all the necessary elements with which to solve her economic crisis in economic terms (energy resources, the dollar as international currency, a self-sufficient market); Minc points out that the United States remains at the center of the new world economy by simply shifting coasts from the Atlantic to the Pacific in an internal pivoting measure. France instead appears as both the victim of geography and of a fierce economic setting in which she has no control over the key variables.

The economic pessimism of these thinkers stands in marked opposition to the political and economic voluntarism of the Socialists in power, even if they too have lowered their sights in the past year.

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It is significant that Chevenement's dynamism as the minister of industry, his belief that France is an international industrial giant now that its key industries and banks are nationalized clashes deeply with the economic analyses of Closets, Albert, and Minc, despite the latter's approval of nationalizations. Minc pulls the rug out from under official industrial rhetoric and plans to put France at the center of the map in the computer revolution, as the headquarters of a major computer institute, by stressing that the computer revolution will not be a third industrial revolution or the motor for the resurgence of the French economy. Computers have enormous social consequences, but few economic ones, because of their low cost, and lack of spillovers like those of the car and appliance industries of the 1950s.

If Closets, Albert and Minc disagree with official Socialist voluntarism on the economic front, it is really in the realm of social analysis that the full impact of their corrosive ideas makes itself felt, once again through the prism of unemployment.

The explosive nature of Closets's, Albert's, and Minc's critiques of French society stems from the fact that they are drawing a major social cleavage *inside* the very ranks of those social forces which brought Mitterrand to power. Privileges are not on the Right and justice on the Left in these new analyses, but rather are found on both sides of the ideological divide. If the *rentier* is a negative force, the small entrepreneur who takes risks and develops new economic activities and jobs is a new (and somewhat unlikely) Socialist hero whose rights must be protected and activities encouraged. Similarly, on the other side of the divide, blue collar workers with difficult jobs, workers in temporary jobs or in marginal activities, and above all, the unemployed merit sympathy and social concern, but *not* the vested interests of the Left, i.e., powerful service sectors with their trade union clout in the civil service, educational system, banking sector, or multiple state-associated companies (such as the electric company EDF-GDF or Air France).

This new analysis of French society and its fundamental inequalities leads to pointing out new enemies in the quest for social justice as opposed to social peace. Three stand out in particular: the neocorporatist interests which, behind an ideology of universalism, are really only pleading for their own selfish interests—special premiums, reduced fares and prices, early retirement plans, fewer working hours, subsidized vacations and cultural activities. All these costs are borne by the collectivity. Closets in particular points out

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that it is the most powerful groups in monopolies sheltered from international competition which are always served first because of their enormous nuisance value. Those who would deserve special privileges because of their hard jobs never have sufficient clout to obtain them. The strike has thus become the arm of the strong and no longer of the weak. The second group are, in Albert's terms, the "old males" who, as the central class of workers, are largely indifferent to the plight of unemployment which falls mainly on the young, on women, and on the untrained. These "old males" are overrepresented in all political and social organizations, while the unemployed have no voice. It is the "old males" who have largely opposed the widespread use of part-time work in more flexible work structures, a solution which is most promising in the battle against unemployment. The third enemy is not a group but a prevalent notion, namely that of an egalitarian public service system and welfare state whose redistributions are in effect most unegalitarian, since they benefit most those who are already better off (who use more medicines, have more education, go to subsidized cultural events and generally milk the state).

The critique of the French welfare state marks a major turning point away from a postwar social consensus which bridged both the Left and the Right. In seeing the welfare state as the result of a "bureaucratic accumulation" of postwar economic exceptionalism, Minc argues in tones which are somewhat reminiscent of the American neoconservatives. He feels that Frenchmen should become more individually responsible for their social expenses. All should be guaranteed against major medical risks, but beyond this threshold each should pay the effective cost of his coverage as a function of his real needs. In other words, there will no longer be a collective administrative "mother" who in the end will solve all problems. Society is increasingly perceived as a working whole, all of whose parts have their legitimate needs and rights, whether industrialists, workers, middle classes, functionaries, or the unemployed. The old notion of capitalists against *travailleurs* is melting under the thrust of economic reality and social pragmatism. As Closets says, the time has come to put an end to the myth of *un angelisme syndicalo-ouvrieriste.*

These views reflect the inherent liberalism which underlies the economic analyses of all three authors. French social policy must change, because it is no longer in tune with economic reality. The state should not protect all equally, and society as a whole must adapt to meet an era of economic no-growth in which it is no longer

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possible to continue expanding the size of the pie with unequal privileges for all. So that society does not split again into two major social divides of haves and have nots, it is imperative that the privileged workers, whose status was acquired in the opulent 1960s and 1970s, lose some of these privileges and share them with those workers who are defined by the current phase of economic stagnation. For Closets, Albert, and Minc, only the Left in power can have enough moral authority to carry out such an unpopular program without being accused of vile rightist objectives. The cost will be high, because it entails cutting into the privileges of one's own supporters, but there may be little alternative.

After having seen at length in all three books the major constraints which strap France, the authors' conclusions that the future can be bright smack of blind voluntarism and a quasi-religious faith in national redemption. But looking closer one can see that their reasoning draws its legitimacy from deep-standing reflexes embedded in French culture. The solution to the French crisis which Albert, Minc, and Closets propose is drawn from purely social considerations which eschew the economic realm entirely as a no-win proposition. Paradoxically, it is France's original unwillingness to espouse economic liberalism which serves the authors' optimism, and which allows them to abandon economic solutions and dream in the much more familiar French terms of culture and society.

The authors' consensus is that France can pull itself out of the crisis by becoming a much more open, flexible, and modern society. Jobs as a scarce commodity will have to be increasingly shared by all, through an increase in part-time work, leaves of absence, more studies, and early retirement. Behind this optimistic view lies a fundamental assumption that French society in its younger generations has changed life styles and philosophical priorities. Work as an absolute goal and self-definition has been replaced by the notion of quality of life priorities, by the search for creative leisure time, and, ultimately, by non-financial criteria of well-being. It is this new accent on leisure which makes Minc think along with Albert that part-time work will become the wave of the future. This more fluid and open mentality will have little in common with the neo-corporatist and culturally authoritarian ethics of the traditional working class. As Minc says, civil society has proven its dynamism, its liberalism, and its capacity to adapt spontaneously to a static economy. The energies which go into moonlighting, alternative styles of consumption, and barter are the energies which will stop unemployment in

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the future and reduce the burden of the welfare state.

There may be more immediate cultural and political reasons for the optimism of these authors. Their preference for civil society over economics and the state is meant to recycle the old enthusiasms of 1968, to reawaken the forces of *autogestion,* flexibility, and spontaneity in a drastically different economic context. There is almost a perverse feeling that what could not be done with the opulence of the late 1960s can now be brought about, thanks to a climate of necessity and austerity. In concrete political terms, the youngish generation of social activists and theorists who espoused the Left, especially its Rocardian wing, and who feel increasingly alienated from the party Socialists in power, are given a new future to dream about, and a new ideal to work toward (a society which solves unemployment through social innovation), an ideal that leaves dreary economics and politics by the wayside. In this long-term optimism, political violence, social unrest, tensions, and struggles are left out as are the danger of a *rentier* neocorporatist backlash, or the return to a narrow-minded protectionism. It is the most advanced, liberal, and modern sectors of French society on which the wager is made. And in a quasi-Marxist manner, today's oppressed, namely, marginal, temporary workers with no guarantees, will as tomorrow's new part-timers of creative scarcity inherit the world. Ultimately though, it is unclear whether a dynamic civil society, which has fully internalized the market mechanism of liberalism, can really lead the way in a country where the economic future is bleak and the state continues to be the propelling force. Substitution mechanisms never work.

Closets, Albert, and Minc have denounced the evils of French society, its fears, hypocrisies, privileges, and frequent selfishness, basing their work on a clearheaded evaluation of French economic and social impasses. This in itself is a major step in breaking the ambiguities and silences of the Left in power. In fighting against the political and economic voluntarism of the Socalists, Closets, Albert, and Minc have taught the lessons of the marketplace and the economic reality of social costs which no amount of ideology can hide. They have sought, however, to sweeten its bitter pill with the language of social innovation and a dose of utopian escapism.

In reality, the *état d'âme* they mirror is one of a French national-historical impotence unprecedented since the postwar period. Seventeenth century Venice in decline is not a model for true optimists but for resigned economic realists.

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POEMS

Jacob Glatshteyn (1896–1971)

SMALL NIGHT-MUSIC

1

Shadow me in, dark me in, disappear me.
I am too small to live big.
Happen around me less and less,
Flutter around me mysteries of small things.
Give me back my portion of world
On a small saucer,
Quiver around me sunrises,
Sunsets, rains, sleep.
Give me the smallest cot.
I am too small to live big.
Blow quietly on my life
And put it out.

12

Trust me just from here to here
And a few steps more.
I am coming by myself, I won't cheat you.
I shall bring you my open face
And you will sense all the becauses.
I am oversaddened with books
And drunk with the wine of times,
And I am languid as a pampered cat
In a warm house.

Editor's Note: These poems are from an anthology of *American Yiddish Poetry,* edited by Benjamin Hrushovski and Barbara Benavie, to be published by University of California Press. Jacob Glatshteyn's and M.L. Halpern's poems were translated from the Yiddish by Benjamin Hrushovski and Kathryn Hellerstein. A. Leyeles's and J.L. Teller's poems were translated from the Yiddish by Benjamin Hrushovski and Barbara Benavie.

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See, I am coming back to myself,
To the wonder of the first dot.
Close the window, dear friend,
Keep me from the slightest breeze.
In the dark we are two.
What could be lesser and smaller.
Let all hungry tasters
Do as they like.
And we shall saddle our sleep
And ride in a private garden.
There, in the dark, will be kissing
The mays and the mustnots.

M. L. Halpern (1886–1932)

WHY NOT

Moyshe-Leyb stops in the middle of the night—
To ponder whether the world is right.
He stops and listens as his thoughts appear—
Someone whispers in his ear
That everything is straight and everything is crooked
And the world spins around everything.
Moyshe-Leyb plucks a straw with his nails
And smiles.
Why?—
Why not.

Just so, at night, he plucks a straw
And once again a thought arrives.
Again he listens—a thought appears—
Someone whispers in his ear
That nothing is straight and nothing is crooked
And the world spins around nothing.
Moyshe-Leyb plucks a straw with his nails

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And smiles.
Why?—
Why not.

A. Leyeles (1889–1966)

FABIUS LIND'S DAYS

Fabius Lind's days are running out in blood.
Red serpents of failures empty his veins.
In his head—muddy-white stains. Confusion.
He could have . . .
He could have . . .
Gray spiderwebs of melancholy—
On his mind, before his eyes,
And a strange taut bow
Is aiming at the tip of his nose.
Fabius Lind, sunk in contemplation,
In talking, in reading, tightens—
Out of sheer being lost—
The noose around his neck.

Why can't Fabius Lind hold on to
The coattails of these times
And stride in the rows of all the marchers?
Why can't he swing back to his childhood playground
And bring his flutes to play
The song of calm?
Why is he so indifferent at funerals
And so nervous at a birth?
Why can't he grab the two whores—
death and life
And dance with them a holy-foolish dance?

Whom does he ask?
No one. Just himself.
If he could brain-out an answer,
He would not have asked.

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In these days of straight rails, Fabius Lind
Is not awake.
He strays for hours, for days,
And dreams of pure isn'ts.
A time that isn't,
A land that isn't,
People that aren't,
A Fabius Lind who doesn't exist.
He could have . . .
He could have . . .
Yes, yes, he could have!

The desire, the thought, flies away on an uninvited wind
And comes back in a ball of smoke.
The calculating mind has never served well Fabius Lind.

J. L. Teller (1912–1972)

LETTER TO SIGMUND FREUD

How was the weather on that day?
With how many colors did the sunset burn?
Was it in Vienna or in Paris
When inside you like lightning, struck
The Do's and Don'ts
Of your Psychoanalysis?

A narrow street. As through a funnel
The sun dripped.
Suddenly—terrified horses
Behind you.

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You ran like a grotesque phantom.
Thought burst upon you
Suddenly like this.

And were you in your own room?
The eyes drooped tired. Children shouted
Under the windows. An organ-grinder
Milked a folk-song.
The day was cloudy and hot,
Full of boredom and expectation.

What melody was tangled up in your head
On that morning? Ti-dam, dam-dam, ti-dam.
Was the soap stinging your eyes?
And how did the part in your hair go?
You forgot to pay the conductor.
You overpaid him.
You stroked the heads of children.

With vacant eyes you surveyed the sky
And strolled on like a madman.

What did you dream that morning?
Flies buzzed around the net of your sleep.
The cold scared your blanket.
Flies kissed you like sugar.
Your brother copulated with an eagle.

Tell me, how did you reach the moment
That poured down on you
Like a sunny rain
On your grandfather's Passover Eve?

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MODERN DOCUMENT

Herbert Ferber

THE ROTHKO CASE

In a memoir in the February 1983 *New Criterion,* John Meyers discusses, among other things, the celebrated Rothko case, a case which for five years was one of the main subjects of conversation in and out of the art world. But in the course of the long litigation, so many complicated facts came out that only someone who had been involved personally or had diligently researched the court records and interviewed the protagonists would be qualified to write about them. There has been one book, not entirely accurate, and many superficial articles, more or less accurate. Mr. Meyers's account, however, is little more than a personal interpretation of what he must have heard, and read in the *New York Times.*

The facts, I might add, are important not only in themselves, but because the Rothko case is tied to the saga of success of modern art in America and reveals a good deal about the uneasy relation of art to money—for many of the abstract expressionist painters, sculptors, dealers, and collectors.

The Rothko case, it will be recalled, involved a suit brought by me against the executors of Mark Rothko's estate, Bernard Reis, an accountant handling the affairs of Rothko and many other artists and an officer of the Marlborough Gallery, Theodoros Stamos, a painter and close friend of Rothko, and another of Rothko's friends, Morton Levine, professor of anthropology, and against Frank Lloyd, the head of the Marlborough Gallery—for acting in self-interest and against the interests of Mel Rothko's estate and Rothko's two children, Kate and Christopher. After five years of litigation, the allegations against the three executors were sustained and Frank Lloyd was found guilty.

Meyers begins with a charming and disarming narrative about the artists and writers he knew as a gallery owner and editor. In writing about the Rothko case, he quotes from a journal and from conversations with various people, presumably to lend authenticity to his views. But most of them had only a brief or passing acquain-

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tance with those closer to the case. The memoir is spiced with lively sketches of Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Bernard Reis, and Frank Lloyd. It is perhaps pertinent to note that Stamos and Reis appear as Meyers's friends, and Lloyd as one with whom he had extremely pleasant business dealings. He did not, he mentions, know Levine well. Levine, Stamos, and Reis became executors of Rothko's estate, and Levine and his wife became guardians of his son, Christopher. Frank Lloyd was, of course, Rothko's dealer.

Despite Meyers's claim to have known some of the key figures, I must raise serious doubts about his version, doubts based on material in my files and those of my lawyer, and on my own long friendships with Rothko, Stamos, and Reis. Meyers does not seem to know, for example, that my former wife and I were sole executors for the Rothko estate from 1950 and guardians of Kate, after her birth, until years later when, because of the increasing value of his work, Rothko thought it advisable to have younger men administer his estate, and in the case of Reis, to have a sophisticated financial advisor. Because of the many errors in Meyers's story, I feel obliged, however distasteful the task, to set the facts down in order to avoid the repetition *ad infinitum* of incorrect and fanciful material.

For example, his description of Bernard and Becky Reis is only partly accurate. It is true that they acted as hosts to many intellectuals, writers, artists, and critics from Europe and the United States in their home on 68th Street, and that Reis was generous with advice in financial and personal matters. But he was happy to add to his famous collection the gifts of paintings and sculptures he received from artists in lieu of payment. Moreover, Meyers seems unaware of Reis's high-handedness in his dealing with artists: for example, his annoyance at having his advice questioned and his insistence on complete control. The door to his salon usually was open only to those who sought his help.

As the years went by Reis became closer to Mark and his affairs, and Mark more and more dependent on his counsel. This is, I believe, as do other friends of Mark's, the principal reason for the catastrophe after Mark's death, for the long and sordid litigation, and for the suffering of all those involved. Meyers recognizes Mark's dependence and mistakes it for a good relationship, but fails to note the harmful influence in the years before Mark died, the decline in his independence, the growth of his fears, and his inability to make decisions without Reis at his shoulder. In a man formerly known for

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his assurance, the surrender to Reis's persuasion often resulted in decisions repugnant to him. Nevertheless, he went along with Reis for fear of offending him and, perhaps, of being betrayed.

A case in point was the proposed deal with Marlborough. Mark was to sell twenty or thirty more paintings to the gallery at Reis's insistence, but he died the night before these works were chosen. Meyers describes the arrangement, which was never concluded, as if it were to have been routine. He goes on to quote Mrs. Bedford, Ad Reinhardt's widow, who had dinner with Mark that evening, as saying "he had been perfectly all right." Had Meyers checked with her, she would have told him, as she told William Rubin (Director, Department of Painting and Sculpture, the Museum of Modern Art) and myself, that Rothko had been disturbed and resentful at being persuaded so insistently by Reis to sell. Mark did not need the money nor would his career be furthered. Mrs. Bedford even suggested that he use an excuse to avoid the meeting. (She had no inkling of his intention to kill himself. If she had, she told me, she would not have left him alone.) For some reason, Mark could not resist Reis. The extent to which Mark's resentment and fear was the cause of his suicide will never be known.

Meyers describes Frank Lloyd as an enterprising "cherub" with a "spiked helmet" who made the reputations of his group of American artists. Again we are faced with only half the story. Meyers should be aware that it required no great perspicacity to choose, with Reis's advice, those artists who were leaders of the New York School and were selling well. He only took on artists who had a good sales record and then skillfully promoted them.

Meyers's description of Mark as a hypocrite who "pursued the rich and the powerful" cannot be reconciled with the man whom I had known closely since 1947—when we both first exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery—and I never heard even rumors of such hypocrisy. On the contrary, he returned a five thousand dollar advance, for instance, when he learned that he had been misled about where his paintings were to hang in the Seagram Building. Furthermore, he did not pursue Mr. and Mrs. de Menil. They came to him for the Houston Chapel paintings because they liked his work, and because they saw some spiritual, mystical, or religious content in it. On one occasion, I witnessed the exact opposite of the duplicity Meyers imputes to Mark, when he said he told an influential critic who wanted to do a piece about him, "Do me the favor of not writing about me."

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Meyers is floating a speculative balloon when he states that Mark and Mel's marriage was based on his gratitude for her financial support early in his career—a totally mistaken and amateurish psychological diagnosis. During my lengthy and intimate relationship with both of them in New York, and in my home in Vermont where they would spend a week at a time over a period of years, Mark said to me on more than one occasion, "I love her. I love the way she walks . . ." etc. The marriage eventually failed—as do many others. But Meyers's statement that he "was not surprised" leads one to believe that he knew something more than gossip.

Meyers's facts on other matters are equally questionable. For example, his statement that McKinney and Stamos first discovered Mark's body is minor but revealing. It was Mark's assistant who first arrived that morning. He speaks of Kate's "greed," as though it were she and not I—as executor of Mel Rothko's estate and as Kate's guardian—who brought the suit "against her father's three closest friends and an art gallery." As a minor, she could not have initiated the action. The decision was made for ethical and legal reasons, after many months of trying to find some justification for the behavior of her father's friends. Only after it had become clear both to me and my lawyers that there was no acceptable explanation, and after many vain attempts were made to come to an out-of-court settlement, did I feel obliged to proceed against the executors and Marlborough. The three executors of Mark's estate, in conjunction with the gallery, were, as Judge Midonick said later, "wasting" that estate and consequently the children's property. Had I not acted to protect Kate's rightful inheritance and by implication that of her younger brother, I would have been guilty of negligence. Kate took over the direction of the suit two years later when she reached her majority.

For clarification, it is also necessary to look at pertinent, earlier events which Meyers seems not to know. When Mark died, Mel learned from Reis, who had written Mark's will, that she and her children had been virtually disinherited. This presented a dilemma. The will left all of the eight hundred paintings located in Mark's studio and in a warehouse, and large sums in cash, to a foundation his executors were to administer; the house, its furnishings, and forty-eight paintings were left to Mel. Her dilemma stemmed from wanting both to respect Mark's wishes and to protect her children's interests. She learned that a husband could not deprive his wife of more than two-thirds, and his children, if minors; of more than one-half, of his property. She also had been told by Mark, as had Robert

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Goldwater (Mark's chosen biographer), William Rubin, and I, that he wanted his work to be given or loaned to museums and to be kept out of the private sector. Mel had been told, too, by Reis, that there was enough money and other property to keep her and the children in comfort. Reis did not tell her, but she learned that by signing an "election" she could regain all of the children's and her share. In her predicament she asked William Rubin for his opinion. He told her to sign the "election," because there were enough paintings for her and for the museums. She did not sign for herself, out of respect for Mark's wish, but she did sign for her children.

Meyers does not appear to know that when Mel died (six months after Mark) Reis called me in Vermont in September 1970, to tell me that my former wife and I had been appointed by Mel as her executors and as guardians of Kate; or that, when I offered to return to New York immediately, Reis advised me not to, since there was a second and later will which he had written, excluding us. He indicated, however, that this will had been mislaid and said that his staff was searching for it in the files. I did not question Reis at the time, but that will has never been found. Neither does Meyers mention, and I assume he does not know, that Reis came to see me in New York in October 1970, to tell me that Mel had not signed an "election" to void Mark's will and that, as a consequence, all eight hundred paintings and four to five million dollars in cash were to go to the foundation. I do not know whether Reis was then aware (I was not) that Mel had signed the "election" for her children. He did tell me that Mel's lawyer, Gerald Dickler, and he were still searching for the second will. He again emphasized, as he had in the telephone call to Vermont, that I would make a great deal of money if, in the absence of the second will, I were to be recognized as Mel's executor. I thought this strange, and only later saw it as an attempt to insure my cooperation. I learned from him, too, that the executors had sold "some" paintings to Marlborough three months after Mark's death. (This indefinite "some" turned out to be one hundred choice paintings at eighteen thousand dollars each, to be paid over twelve years without interest, bringing the price down to far below what Mark had earlier received from Marlborough. When I said I thought it unwise to sell even "some" paintings so soon, he said cash was needed to pay taxes, legal fees, and to help needy artists. With four to five million dollars in cash this hardly seemed to be necessary. The "needy artist" clause in his will, Mark had told me, was inserted by

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Reis to keep the foundation tax-exempt. Yet Reis, as an accountant, must have known that a foundation whose purpose was to give paintings to museums would have been tax-exempt. I also learned from Reis that Marlborough had been given exclusive sales rights for eight years by the executors. Was the "needy artist" clause inserted as an excuse for selling the paintings by the exclusive agent, and to divert paintings to the private sector instead of giving or lending them to museums?

At this point, I retained Stanley Geller as my attorney. It now became known that Reis was an officer of the Marlborough Gallery, that Stamos had been taken on by Marlborough more or less at the time of Mark's death, and that the three executors were also self-appointed trustees of the foundation. These facts raised the question of a conflict of interest on the part of Reis and Stamos. Robert Goldwater, art critic and professor of fine arts at New York University until his death in 1973, was another trustee. (Mark also had wanted William Rubin, who advised him about foundations, but an embarrassed Mark later asked him to drop out because Reis did not want him.) Goldwater was told, six or seven months after serving as a trustee, that Mark had changed his mind and had verbally informed Reis that helping "needy artists" should be the sole purpose of the foundation. I can only repeat that Goldwater, Mel Rothko, William Rubin, and I knew of Mark's long-standing wish to have all his work in museums.

From the time my former wife and I were finally appointed as Mel's executors and Kate's guardians in December 1970, until June 1971, we tried to obtain information from the executors of Mark's estate about their actions and contracts with Marlborough. At a meeting in June 1971, with Stamos, Levine, and their lawyers, at which we again asked for information—after many written requests were ignored—they tried to defend their actions. One contract with Marlborough for the sale of the one hundred paintings was mentioned, but not shown or given to us. With the help of a chart, Frank E. Karelson, their lawyer, tried to explain their sale at ridiculously low prices as due to a drop in the stock market on the day of the sale —as if prices of art fluctuate daily with the market. We were again promised information by mail. Only after an ultimatum did we receive copies of two contracts with Marlborough. One was for the one hundred paintings; the other, which had not even been mentioned at the meeting, was for the seven hundred remaining paintings con-

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signed to Marlborough—including charges for storage, handling, and restoration. Finally, in November 1971, we filed a petition to oust the executors and revoke the contracts.

Meyers is wrong when he writes that Levine "promptly divorced himself from the other two executors," and implies that he had been misled by them. What Levine did was to engage different lawyers for his defense, which, I am sure, did not please the others. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that at that June 1971 meeting he vehemently defended his actions, almost two years after becoming an executor. In addition, the Rothkos had designated him and his wife as the six-year-old Christopher's guardians, and they had served in that capacity after Mel's death. In October 1970, when they insisted on giving up the guardianship because they said they could not get along with the boy, my wife and I pleaded with them not to subject the child to another change so soon after his parents' death. In fact, Levine must have known he would have been in a conflict of interest, as both guardian and executor, since he might have had to oppose the other executors to protect his ward or fail to do so by acceding to them. The best way to have resolved this conflict, of course, would have been for him to have resigned his executorship and continue as the boy's guardian. In any event, Christopher became the ward of his aunt, not Mark's and Mel's first choice. I have been asked disapprovingly by Levine's friends why I had not excluded him from the suit, since he claimed that he had been naive in these matters. But Levine had been party to questionable acts, so it was the surrogate's task, not mine, to judge his conduct.

It would appear from Meyers's article that the defendants, whose suffering is described in some detail, were the only ones hurt by the suit. I should point out that at the beginning I was distressed to act against friends, though the defendants tried to relieve me of that feeling by spreading unpleasant stories about my character and my motives. Because of the violent partisanship generated in the course of the trial, I lost other friends and acquaintances. But, more important, Meyers did not think it pertinent, after so much speculation about everything else, to consider the trauma of the children who lost both parents within six months. Nor did he consider the effect of all the publicity on the children, their apprehensions, and the violent disruption of their lives during five years of litigation, or that Kate's studies at medical school were being constantly interrupted. (Earlier, Meyers has an unkind and petulant description of Kate

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Rothko, then an unhappy and lonely child in a strange country, who interfered with his cocktail hour when he visited the Rothkos in Italy.) Instead, Meyers puts all the blame on Kate for the outcome of the case when he writes that, "Kate finally had her way, of course" —as if she, and not Judge Midonick, had handed down the decision against all four defendants, removing Levine, Stamos, and Reis as executors of the foundation, and ordering Frank Lloyd to return any of Rothko's paintings still in his possession and to pay a fine.

As a result of the trial, the Rothko Foundation, it is gratifying to know, has been restructured, and is now acting in accordance with Rothko's wishes and in the interests of his children. But one question remains: why did Meyers, after all these years, decide to reopen the "Rothko Case" with insufficient material to substantiate his opinions? His incomplete history serves only to cast an obfuscating shadow over a complicated and ugly story—and to exonerate those responsible for it.

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Joel Schechter

THE UN-AMERICAN SATIRE OF DARIO FO

Dario Fo received official recognition as a subversive comedian in May 1980, when the United States government refused to let him perform in New York. The Italian satirist and his wife, actress Franca Rame, were denied entry visas by the State Department. Comic monologues performed by the couple in Italy, England, France, Germany, Canada, Peru, and China for over a million spectators could not be seen in America. While the State Department kept the performers out, their satire has recently entered the country in the form of dramatic texts. One of Fo's plays, *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay!,* was staged in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, and Detroit during the past three years. Another satire, *Accidental Death of An Anarchist,* had its American premiere in January 1983, at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. A third political satire, *About Face,* opened at the Yale Repertory Theatre a few months later. If the State Department feared that Fo and Rame's sense of humor would attract a following, its fears were not wholly unfounded.

He may be Europe's leading political satirist and the most influential political playwright since Brecht, but Dario Fo is only beginning to be known in America. Not only has he yet to arrive here in person, over thirty of his plays remain unstaged, untranslated, and unpublished in the United States, despite the recent productions. The loss is more ours than Fo's. Neglect of his plays, and our government's refusal to let Fo and Rame perform here, betray cultural impoverishment and political biases that are peculiarly American.

Fo himself once observed that when politically uninformed actors appear in his plays, "a learning process is set in motion." The political content of the satires—which concern inflation, anarchism, terrorism, police interrogation, and other humorous subjects—has

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Editor's Note: *Accidental Death of An Anarchist* was published in English in the Spring 1979 issue of *Theater.* An adaptation of the same play and a translation of *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay!* were published in London by Pluto Plays. *Klaxon, Trumpets and Raspberries,* retitled *About Face,* was published in the Fall 1983 issue of *Theater.*

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to be understood before actors can perform them accurately; this obstacle alone may explain most of the delay in America's reception of Fo. Also, directors and actors in the United States tend to be box office conscious, even at subscriber-supported, nonprofit institutions; this militates against strong, political satire and politically biased presentations that might unsettle the settled, paying sector of the public.

A few American theaters became interested in staging *Accidental Death of An Anarchist* after it proved to be a box office success in London. The play, performed by a socialist theater group called Belt and Braces, transferred to London's West End and ran there in 1980 through 1981 for over five hundred performances. Suddenly Dario Fo was discovered by the English-speaking world. It seems he has commercial potential despite his politics—or perhaps because of them.

Fo has encountered success before. In 1968 he declared he would no longer be a "jester of the bourgeoisie," and he gave up a steady, handsome income as a creator of middle-class comedies in order to start over again. Since then he and his wife have performed for factory strikers, students, working class audiences—rarely for the wealthier sectors of society. Fo's popularity continues today, as he performs new plays and a one-man show, *Mistero Buffo,* for audiences of thousands who fill the stadiums, assembly halls, and circus tents on his tour circuit. His comedy as playwright and actor extends the traditions of Italian folk comedy and minstrelsy by using them for topical social commentary.

Born in 1926 in a small town in Lombardy, Fo comes from a working class family (his father was a railroad worker). He studied painting and architecture in Milan, and began writing satirical sketches in the 1940s. Since then he has created plays with Franca Rame, and with several collectives, the most recent of which is *La Comune,* based in Milan. His satires have won Fo enemies as well as friends. The Italian Communist Party ended two years of support for him in 1970 because he ridiculed it along with other venerable institutions such as the Catholic Church, the Christian Democrats, and the CIA. In 1973 an Italian fascist group abducted and raped Franca Rame. Fo himself has often been subjected to police harassment and censorship. He once noted that *Accidental Death of An Anarchist* was so successful in its exposure of state repression that it "produced a violent reaction in the centers of power. . . . We were

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subjected to provocation and persecution of all kinds, sometimes more grotesque and comical in their repressive stupidity than the very farce we were performing."

Evidently the United States Department of State wanted to play a role in this continuing farce. The official reasons it offered for Fo and Rame's visa denial in 1980 had to do with their membership in Soccorso Rosso (Red Aid), a group slightly to the left of Amnesty International. Their legal aid for political prisoners in Italy hardly amounts to the support of terrorism of which the State Department accused them. Fo may be a heterodox Marxist, but he is not an advocate of terrorist violence or kidnapping; he condemns and ridicules such actions in his plays. Admittedly, his reasons for opposing terrorist violence are not the same as the State Department's; he objects to terrorism because it serves the state, providing the government with an excuse to increase its repression and control over dissenters.

The folly of terrorism is one subject of Fo's recent play, *Klaxon, Trumpets and Raspberries* (1981). A terrorist failure to kidnap Fiat owner Gianni Agnelli results in a grotesque farce of mistaken identities and Keystone Kops routines. Agnelli is rescued from a burning car by one of his workers, Antonio, but his face is disfigured and his memory is temporarily lost. Hospital surgeons remodel their unknown patient's face to match a photograph of Antonio, who has fled for fear of arrest. When Agnelli leaves the hospital, Antonio's wife assumes the recuperating amnesiac is her husband and takes him home. For a time Agnelli lives a worker's life, complete with exposure to assembly line work and police surveillance. In Milan, Dario Fo played the roles of both Agnelli and Antonio, a virtuoso doubling which suggested that if not for their faces, their property, and armed force, all men might be equal.

Fo's decision to portray a wealthy industrialist and one of his workers in this play is symptomatic of a comic, consciously practiced schizophrenia that pervades his satire. He embraces class enemies as collaborators in farce, presses them into his service, impersonates them, and articulates their contradictory roles with immense humor. In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist,* one of his most frequently produced plays, Fo himself performed the roles of maniac, police inspector, high court judge, and bishop. He kept disowning or temporarily exchanging one persona for another, so that the maniac's opening con-

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fession in the play might well be Dario Fo's personal testimony; he claims to suffer from a psychic disorder, "histromania," a compulsion to play multiple roles.

This disorder is not new, of course. Fo traces his performance and playwriting styles back to the storytelling of medieval minstrels. His characters continually tell one another stories, and impersonate their subjects as they describe them. Besides its continuation of the minstrel tradition, Fo sees in his theater an affinity with Brecht's epic style; Brecht asked actors to present roles "in the third person," narrating their story at the same time they enacted it, and Fo's plays too call for epic acting insofar as they require narrative techniques from actors.

Discussing the connection between his work and Brecht's in a 1974 essay on popular culture, Fo noted that spectators accept the fourth wall convention and identify with the actor's representation of a single character in bourgeois theater. In popular and Brechtian theater, instead of seeing isolated individuals on stage, the audience sees a "chorality." When any role taken by an actor becomes a pretext for his speaking of, as, and to many people, the imaginary fourth wall, the "delegated space" between audience and actors, is destroyed. The audience, like the actors, cannot remain isolated individuals or voyeurs under these circumstances.

As Fo's characters accumulate stories, superstitions, words, and phrases from one another, and mimic one another in retelling stories or events, they reveal a collective aspect of character; one character's gestures and words are frequently stolen or learned from another. Fo's theater further destroys the "delegated space" of actor and audience in the sense that his plays resist notions of character and language as private property. The plays portray redistribution of property—consumer goods in *We Can't Pay,* and the intellectual property of state secrets in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*—a central action which parallels the redistribution of individual characters' language and gestures.

Invention of an alibi by the police in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* becomes a collective act of character creation; the story of the anarchist's death is retold and reenacted many times with variation by men at a Milan police station. The play, written in 1970, is based on an actual occurrence in which an Italian anarchist accused of terrorism was said to have jumped to his death from the fourth floor of

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a Milan precinct station. We now know, and Fo suspected as much when his collective first performed the play, that the anarchist, Giuseppe Pinelli, was pushed to his death by the police.

The subject may not sound like promising material for a farce, but Fo turned it into a political satire that was extremely topical when it opened. In a preface to the play, Fo calls it "an exercise in counterinformation." He notes that all references to the death are based on authentic documents—transcripts of investigations carried out by judges as well as police reports. Now that the case is over a decade old and Pinelli's innocence has been proven, the facts are not so urgent or controversial. However, the play still functions as a complex, comic statement on state secrecy and abuse of power. While it was once a political act, a rallying point for opponents of state repression, and was seen as such by over half a million Italians, Fo's play remains popular in other countries because it suggests that forms of law and power are based on controlled information—state secrets which lose force once they are revealed, shared, and consequently "democratized."

The play's central character, a maniacal buffoon originally acted by Fo himself, parodies the state's control of information by pretending to be a high court judge. He is the epitome of a "documentary clown," turning state evidence around, so it testifies against the state. In his disguise, the buffoon encourages police officers to compose their alibi against accusations that they murdered Pinelli. In 1970 the state issued different reports that contradicted one another and offered specious conclusions, thereby inadvertently exposing its manipulative control of information. Parodying this process to expose it more fully, Fo juxtaposes the contradictions of different official reports for comic effect.

By impersonating different authorities, using different alibis, encouraging the policemen to speak lines and lies he gives them, confusing them so they don't know which thoughts are theirs and which are the impostor judge's, Fo literally turns the police alibis about the murder into charades. In doing this he intimates that state power itself may be one long series of charades, cover-ups, and manipulations of facts that abusive power requires for its perpetuation.

The capacity of Fo's buffoon to impersonate policemen, anarchists, judge, and bishop fosters a comic, carnivalesque vision of society where, as Bakhtin said of the carnival in Rabelais's world,

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people become interchangeable in their mass body. Fo becomes a one-man carnival, and amply represents the collectivity, in one scene in *Mistero Buffo* where he portrays fifteen different characters by himself; they are the spectators watching the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection, and through gestures alone, Fo expresses their varied responses to the event. Fo's ability to perform crowd scenes solo may be one reason that French critic Bernard Dort praised the "ubiquity" of this "epic actor." Writing about Fo's performance in *Mistero Buffo*, Dort regarded it as the opposite of a personal display; Fo was not on stage to show himself, but rather to show many others.

The ubiquitous acting style is also evident in Fo's playwriting, where characters alter society, at least temporarily, by transforming themselves and creating new personae. Given the proper words and gestures, Fo's characters can change from factory owners into factory workers, and from policemen into anarchists. The first act of *Accidental Death* ends with the police singing a favorite hymn of anarchists, because the buffoon convinces them it will make them look more human and sympathetic to the public. "I beg of you! For your own good . . . so the investigation will turn out in your favor . . . Sing!" And they sing:

> The whole world is our homeland.
> Our law is liberty.
> And through our thought
> This world of ours shall finally be free.

The grotesquery of the situations in which Fo's characters find themselves is almost Rabelaisian. Bakhtin noted that in Rabelais's world, the grotesque "discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another way of life . . . a return to Saturn's golden age . . . [requiring] bodily participation in the potentiality of another world." The policemen who sing an anarchist song briefly enter another world—that of their victim. But far more grotesque transformations occur in other scenes by Fo. A police officer appears to experience an hysterical pregnancy in *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay!*. In the same play several women stuff boxes of pasta and vegetables under their coats, so that they look pregnant; their husbands almost instantly accept the roles of worried, expectant fathers. The play is based on actual events in Milan, where massive

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"proletarian shopping" (shoplifting) began after grocery prices skyrocketed in 1974. In Fo's satire the women try to hide their stolen goods from husbands and policemen. The resulting farce offers a vision of urban Saturnalia, where instead of Rabelaisian monks, pilgrims, or scholars, we see housewives, factory workers, and police officers undergo illegal or bizarre transformations in body, and in their relations to nature (vegetables, birth) and private property (unaffordable groceries). Two wives choose to participate bodily in "another world" when a policeman discovers that their bulging bellies are actually bags of salad. Antonia and Margherita claim a miracle has occurred. The police inspector searching for stolen groceries has to accept their word or risk sacrilege:

> *Inspector:* Oh yes? The cabbage miracle. Where are the roses?
> *Margherita:* Who can afford roses? They're very expensive.
> *Antonia:* In hard times, one makes what miracles one can. With the veg you've got handy. Anyway, miracles aren't illegal, you know. Also, there's no law that says a person can't carry a mixed salad on their belly.

The satire here ridicules religion in an age of consumer capitalism, an age of democracy where "miracles" can be purchased in any grocery store; the greatest miracle is that one can afford to pay the bill. In *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay!* the humor is less exotic than, say, the episode in Rabelais where Gargantua eats six pilgrims in a salad because they had hidden under lettuce in a garden to escape their enemies. Rabelais's grotesquery has given way to antic transformations more suitable for an age of inflation, shoplifting, and miracle salad dressing.

Fo's utopian satire allows us to witness small miracles, to see policemen turn into anarchists, and unborn children turn into food; but Fo also knows his satire cannot achieve larger miracles. One speech in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* questions the play's efficacy as social corrective, and inadvertently explains the play's success at box offices twelve years after it was written. Having revealed Italian political scandals, the buffoonish impostor in the play informs us that:

> The average citizen doesn't stand to gain anything from the disappearance of dirty deals. No, he's satisfied to see them de-

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> nounced, to see a scandal break out so that people can talk about it. For him, that's real freedom and the best of all possible worlds.

If Fo knows the limits of his art, he also knows the source of its appeal. The buffoon in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* tells us that his hobby is "the theater of reality, so my fellow artists must be real people, unaware that they are acting in my productions, which is handy, as I've got no cash to pay them." The law officers who hear him, and the audience offstage, willingly become this masterful charlatan's coconspirators, his "fellow artists," as he winks at both groups in turn, confides his impostures and scandals to listeners, and asks them to approve of his disguises. His need for audience acceptance is complemented by his listeners' (on and offstage) desire to be part of a political conspiracy, to hear secrets of state whispered aloud. The spontaneous and intimate sense of conspiracy between the satirist and his audience cannot be achieved by him as easily on electronic media as on stage, in person, especially if the person is Dario Fo.

While Fo's plays allow the audience to eavesdrop on dirty political deals or parodies of them, the playwright resists passivity and voyeurism in spectators. He too uses "real people" as his "fellow artists." To do this he involves the audience and actors in playwriting, by incorporating their suggestions into works-in-progress. Plays such as *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* have acquired several different endings as a result of Fo's exchanges with the audience. Other plays, such as *The Boss's Funeral,* contain an "unwritten" last act; instead of finishing the story, Fo and his cast discuss the play and its political issues with the audience. In this way he allows spectators to "enter" (his word) the performance and modify it; they too become agents of change.

"In this way his performance becomes a discussion (about social conditions) with the audience he is addressing," Brecht wrote of an epic actor's technique; and this can be said of Fo's performance style too, although his style differs markedly from Brecht's epic theater in its factually based, documentary satire. And while both playwrights have tried to break through the fourth wall with techniques that allow them to address the audience directly, Fo has gone one step further "out of character." He leaves his personae behind, to become Dario Fo, listener, conversationalist, debater, political organizer. When he engages in democratic, postperformance dialogues, there is no need for that perpetual outcast and renegade, the political satirist.

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TWO INTERVIEWS WITH JULIA KRISTEVA

I. Elaine Hoffman Baruch

EHB: Do you feel that France is as narcissistic a society as critics such as Christopher Lasch have said that the United States is?

JK: (in English) *Narcissistic?* What does it mean?

EHB: Well, concerned only with the self, to the exclusion of institutions, such as the family, such as even political institutions.

JK: What I can say is that French culture is an extremely chauvinistic culture. That is to say, it is preoccupied with national values. It is interested in its own past. It treats its tradition as a model, and it suffers from being closed towards the outer world. Yes, it's a form of narcissism. But the idea of the "self" is not a French idea. It is an idea belonging originally to Anglo-Saxon psychoanalysis, and it doesn't fare very well in French psychoanalytic literature. It's not a key idea, if one is talking about psychoanalysis. Are individuals in France narcissistic? I wouldn't say that. One would have to make use of other categories. The French are more hysterical, more paranoid, not so much narcissistic—if one can generalize in this area. Personally, I would avoid national diagnoses. I don't think there is a national psychology, there are individual differences.

EHB: You do have what is called the borderline personality in France also?

JK: Yes. Yes.

EHB: What direction will psychoanalysis have to take in order to treat the borderline personality?

JK: That is a very interesting question. The French authors who are beginning to get interested in these problems have been influenced by people such as Winnicott, and Fairbairn. To come to terms with this problem, one would have first of all to reread Freud, and to see, every time he speaks of his neurotic cases, how he treats the problem of narcissism. It is at these moments that the question of

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Editor's Note: These interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 1980, before the publication of Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* by Columbia University Press. They were translated from the French by Brom Anderson (Part I) and Margaret Waller (Part II).

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the borderline might be understood, for this has to do with serious deficiencies at the level of narcissism.

And then another direction that we might take to understand these patients is to pay attention to discourse—and it's here that the contribution of Lacan is important. He taught us to listen to what he calls, following linguistics, the signifier. So, one would have to try to follow these patients at the level of their speech, with all the unconscious implications that their speaking may have—implications inscribed in their speech at the level of the signifier. That is rather difficult, because the discourse of the borderline is fragmentary, difficult to follow, full of gaps, without logical order. It would be necessary for the analyst to implicate himself much more profoundly than in the case of neurotics, in order to be able to associate on behalf of the patient.

EHB: When did you decide to become an analyst?

JK: I was working on language, in particular situations where it does not yet exist—that is to say, in children, and where it no longer exists, that is, in psychotics. And as I worked in these linguistic situations, I realized that I found myself or put myself in a relation of transference to the people I was observing, and I wanted to experience these transferences more personally. I came to realize that there is no such thing as a neutral meaning, and that a signification is a signification one gives to someone else. It was therefore necessary to contest the whole of positivist linguistics, and I wanted to put positivist linguistics on trial by starting from a precise experience of the transference.

EHB: In an interview that you had done once for *Psych et Pol,* which was translated in a new anthology edited by Elaine Marks called *New French Feminisms,* you said, "There can be no socio-political transformation without a transformation of subjects, in other words, in our relation to social constraints, to pleasure, and, more deeply, to language." Elsewhere you have spoken about the importance of language for structuring experience, and so have other French theorists. American feminists speak about the importance of language also, but I think they are talking about something quite different. How can we change women's relation to social constraints, to pleasure, and, especially, to language?

JK: I don't know what American feminists have in mind when they speak of the important role of language; I must admit that I don't know much about American work in this area. When I spoke the

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sentence you have quoted, it had to do with the following: very often in France a certain sort of feminism has posed itself solely as a movement of sociological protest, which consists in making of women a sort of social force or motor which would ultimately take on the role played in Marxist theory by the proletariat. Here is a class or social group which is oppressed, which is not paid well enough, which does not have its proper place in production and in political representation, and this oppressed class, this oppressed social stratum, should fight, essentially, to obtain recognition—economic, political, and ideological.

I, on the other hand—and I am not alone in this—think that women's protest is situated at an altogether different level. It is not first of all a social protest, although it is also that. It is a protest which consists in demanding that attention be paid to the subjective particularity which an individual represents in the social order, of course, but also and above all in relation to what essentially differentiates that individual, which is the individual's sexual difference. How can one define this sexual difference? It is not solely biological; it is, above all, given in the representations which we ourselves make of this difference. We have no other means of constructing this representation than through language, through tools for symbolizing. Now these tools are common to the two sexes. You speak English if you're English; you speak French if you're French, whether you are a man or a woman. So how do we situate ourselves in relation to these universal tools in order to try to mark our difference?

Here the position of some feminists has seemed to me rather strange and regressive. Certain feminists, in France particularly, say that whatever is in language is of the order of strict designation, of understanding, of logic, and it is male. Ultimately, theory or science is phallic, is male. On the other hand that which is feminine in language is whatever has to do with the imprecise, with the whisper, with impulses, perhaps with primary processes, with rhetoric—in other words, speaking roughly, the domain of literary expression, the region of the tacit, the vague, to which one would escape from the too-tight tailoring of the linguistic sign and of logic. This is, so to speak, a Manichean position which consists in designating as feminine a phase or a modality in the functioning of language. And if one assigns to women that phase alone, this in fact amounts to maintaining women in a position of in-

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feriority, and, in any case, of marginality, to reserving for them the place of the childish, of the unsayable, or of the hysteric. That the valorization of this modality of expression can have a critical, if not a subversive function, is obvious; but I think that it is not sufficient either. On the other hand, other women say that we must appropriate the logical, mastering, scientific, theoretical apparatus, and these women consider it extremely gratifying that there are women physicists, theorists, and philosophers. In saying this they preserve for women an extremely important place in the domain of culture, but this attitude can be accompanied by a denial of two things; on the one hand, of the question of power, and on the other, of the particularity of women.

In other words, one can fit oneself to the dominant discourse —theoretical discourse, scientific discourse—and on the basis of that find an extremely gratifying slot in society, but to the detriment of the expression of the particularity belonging to the individual as a woman. On the basis of this fact, it seems to me, that one must try not to deny these two aspects of linguistic communication, the mastering aspect and the aspect which is more of the body and of the impulses, but to try, in every situation and for every woman, to find a proper articulation of these two elements. What does "proper" mean? That which best fits the specific history of each woman, which best expresses her. So you see that I would be just as much against the slogan, "All women should master the dominant discourse," as I am against the position which asserts that all this is part of the game of power and that women must express themselves in literature. I think that the time has come when we must no longer speak of all women. We have to talk in terms of individual women and of each one's place inside these two poles. One of the gravest dangers that now presents itself in feminism is the impulse to practice feminism in a herd. At first this was perhaps important, because people cried out, "We demand abortion," "We demand the social advantages we have been denied," but now this "we" is becoming troublesome. There have to be "I's," and women have to become authors, actors, not to hypostatize or overvalue those particular kinds of work, but so that this perspective will push each one of us to find her own individual language.

EHB: I would like to ask you about your new book, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (*Powers of Horror*).

JK: It is mainly a psychoanalytic book, but like all psychoanalytic

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books, it is somewhat self-analytical, like—I am going to make a pretentious comparison—Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams.*

EHB: Your subtitle is *Essai sur l'abjection.* How would you translate the term *l'abjection* in English?

JK: It may be impossible. *L'abjection* is something that disgusts you, for example, you see something rotting and you want to vomit—it is an extremely strong feeling which is at once somatic and symbolic, which is above all a revolt against an external menace from which one wants to distance oneself, but of which one has the impression that it may menace us from the inside. The relation to abjection is finally rooted in the combat which every human being carries on with the mother. For in order to become autonomous, it is necessary that one cut the instinctual dyad of the mother and the child and that one become something other.

EHB: There are two rather well-known books in the United States right now; one by Dorothy Dinnerstein, called the *The Mermaid and the Minotaur,* and the other by Nancy Chodorow called *The Reproduction of Mothering.* Their thesis is that the exaltation and the degradation of the woman stems from the fact that mothers rear children, and that if fathers or men were to have equal responsibility for the rearing of infants all of our sexual malaise would be eliminated, all of the problems having to do with women's inaccessibility to culture would be ended. How do you feel about this idea?

JK: If there is a sort of rage against mothers, it is not only because they take care of the child, but because they carry it in their bodies. And that is something which men, even if they handle the diapers, can't do. I think it is here that is rooted a certain desire, a certain negative desire, a certain rejection of the maternal function—a fascinated rejection. Moreover, the fact that men do the same work as women with regard to the education of children or their early upbringing will certainly change things in the psychic functioning of children, but I don't know if it will do so in the way foreseen by these feminists. In fact, it will decimate the paternal function. I mean that it will render ambiguous the paternal role. Up to the present, in the division of sexual roles, the mother takes care of the child, the father is farther away. The father represents the symbolic moment of separation.

EHB: And you feel that that should be retained?

JK: If we do what they call for, that is, if the fathers are always pre-

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sent, if fathers become mothers, one may well ask oneself who will play the role of separators?

EHB: Couldn't they both be? Couldn't both sexes be both nurturers and differentiators somehow?

JK: I would like to think so, but it would be very difficult. What seems more likely is that many borderline children will be produced, and it will become necessary to find a third party, that is to say, the school, all those medical sectors of the different "psy's": psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, who will play the paternal role. The number of helping institutions for early childhood, for school children, that are forming now in our society is extraordinary, and one may well ask oneself what their function is. These people, of course, replace the failed mother, as is remarked only too often, but it is above all to replace the nonexistent father: to play the role of the separator, of someone who comforts the mother in order to permit her to take her role in hand. The question is not so much what must be done in order that women be happy, but what is to be done in order to allow children to develop so they will accede to the various elements of human culture. And I think that what interferes with that access is the underestimation of the paternal function.

EHB: Nancy Chodorow, whom I mentioned before, would say that the function of the father has nothing to do with his sex, and that someone female could play the same role of separator.

JK: Yes, certainly; that's why I say "a third party," who could be the woman psychotherapist to whom one can bring the child.

EHB: Let me get back to that problem of not being able to overcome the biological fact of the mother carrying the child, never mind rearing it. How would you feel if the biological revolution were to go so far that the reproduction of the infant took place outside the womb? Would you welcome that possibility, which I no longer think is quite so much of a fantasy as we had considered it even five years ago?

JK: I think that we are all caught up in moral scruples, and we tell ourselves that in the near future such a prospect is to be avoided, for ontological and ethical reasons, for the various experiments which could be done in this area should have guarantees. We aren't very clear in what domain, but we have the impression that we are exposing ourselves to an arbitrariness which is not very far from the experiments of the Nazis that hover on the horizon. This

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is a defensive attitude, which I cannot help. But I think that nothing will stop "progress" and that, as you say, this will be the case some day. Assuming that, the question to ask ourselves is, "How will sexual roles be distributed? What will fathers do and what will mothers do when the child is no longer carried in the uterus?"

Here we are in the face of a humanity whose character is completely unforeseeable. In the present state of things, one attitude one might have, a defensive one, would consist of saying, "There must be preserved, along a straight Freudian line, the distribution of the paternal function, on the one side, and the maternal function, on the other, so that the speaking subjects who are constructed, psychically and not just biologically, can have the "normality" which we think of as theirs. And what is this normality? It is that which succeeds in getting along, surviving, in the Oedipal triangle." This position seems to me more and more untenable. I think that we will not be able to hold on for very long to this position—the fathers on one side, the mothers on the other. There will be mixtures of these two functions, which will give rise to a very different psychic map of humanity. One will no longer have the good neurotic caught between Daddy and Mommy. One will have a psychic structure much closer to what is seen now as borderline, I suppose, which does not necessarily mean that it will be outside the social order.

EHB: Without going so far as reproduction *ex utero,* what do you think the future of the family will be like? What changes do you see occurring?

JK: This is difficult to say. I think that you are asking me what is, in the end, a social question. Now, I take very seriously the threat of a crisis—an economic crisis affecting the whole world. There are two solutions to this. I think that this threat of a crisis, which is real, stems from the entrance of the Third World on the scene, from the lack of resources, and, of course, from the way these problems are handled. Either, then, this crisis will be resolved through a war of extermination, or—and I am inclined personally to believe the second alternative—it will find a solution in, to put it brutally, sovietization. If we are lucky, our ruling groups will find reformist solutions to the internal conflicts of the Western countries, which will move the Western world in a social-

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democratic direction. This sort of society, at first, will have to maintain itself by relying on certain conservative forces in the domain of morality, of sex, of the relations of individuals to each other. It will have to avoid having too many explosions, too much violence, too much free acting out of desires. So, there will be a consolidation of the family. There will be a politics of high birthrate to favor women staying at home, while at the same time giving women part-time work, to satisfy women who work away from home while at the same time taking care of their children. In fact this is just what has been happening in Eastern Europe, with lesser means and via a totalitarian regime. Those regimes too, are feeling the crisis and will be driven to a relative liberalization—if there is no war.

EHB: What do you see as the place of love in this new conservatism of the family?

JK: It's the only thing which can save us. One would have to try, in this situation, to save some territories of freedom. This would be in the realm of affect: a place where people could explore the limits of their discourse, of their thought, of their manipulation of colors and sounds, of words, of whatever you like, so that they can express themselves as they wish. But the space of freedom for the individual is love—it is the only place, the only moment in life, where the various precautions, defenses, conservatisms break down, and one tries to go to the limit of one's being; so, it is fundamental.

EHB: People such as Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* and Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* claim that love is a myth propagated by men for the control of women.

JK: Love is not something fixed; there is a history of love. In certain instances, it is possible that it has been a means of blackmail by one sex of the other—and essentially, of the female by the male. But that is a vision, perhaps through the wrong end of the telescope, which doesn't interest me very much because if you look at things that way the whole of culture oppresses women. A madrigal, or Shakespeare, is antiwoman. What does one suggest as an alternative? I for my part say that the love relation is the only chance to go through narcissism towards the recognition of the symbolic moment. And I would look with horror on a humanity which tried to wipe out this symbolic moment.

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II. Perry Meisel

PM: At what moment in contemporary French intellectual history would you say you arrived in Paris?

JK: It was a very interesting moment. Politically, it was one of the highest moments of Gaullism, that period when Charles de Gaulle said that he wanted to create a sphere of influence stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. Intellectually, there was the very interesting coexistence of the discovery of Russian formalism through Lévi-Strauss; a certain revival of Marxism, also on the background of structuralism (I mean a rereading of Hegel), and a third very important current, the renewal of psychoanalysis through Lacan. All these movements were, for me, the real background of the 1968 events. Because if you look at the people who were involved in the 1968 revolution—students—most of them were involved beforehand in very advanced theoretical writings. *Les Cahiers pour l'analyse,* for instance, at the Ecole Normale were done by people who became Maoists after 1968. So it was a kind of intellectual turmoil, a sort of real theoretical fever. Where can you speak of Marxism, structuralism, Freudianism? Not in the Eastern countries, it's not possible. American society is too technocratic and too dominated by positivist ideologies, whereas that's not the case in French society. It was a very, very rare conjunction.

PM: At what point did existentialism give way to this new wave and why?

JK: On the one hand, existentialism was, in my view, a regression with regard to the great philosophical and aesthetic formal movements, to take only my own fields. The whole development of linguistics, of formal logic, was fundamentally ignored by Sartrean existentialism. If you're interested, on the other hand, in art, the great revolution of the avant-garde, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, and after them the surrealists—the entrance of psychosis into the life of the city which modern art represents—these were also ignored by existentialism. Thus, it was a reaction to all that. Structuralism, Marxism, Freudianism, joined together, are a reaction.

PM: And yet Lacan was, with the surrealists, already at work in the

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late 1920s. Why did it take so long, indeed, twenty years, maybe more than that, for this to break out? Lévi-Strauss had already begun his work before the war as well.

JK: Because of political reasons: you had the war. At that moment there was a sociological way of thinking, more rooted in the everyday and looking for immediate and simple causalities, that prevailed. Existentialism lasted after the war, for historical reasons and because of economic difficulties.

PM: So that a movement that claimed to interpret history was itself part of the determination.

JK: Precisely. It couldn't distance itself.

PM: It has been said that Sartre was unable to think the unconscious.

JK: Absolutely. I think that Sartrean thought has no means to deal with the unconscious and, similarly, with everything which is material and formal, in other words, with the whole problem of the modern arts, of poetry, of plastic art. The unconscious as a logic, as a language, which is the essence of the Freudian discovery, is entirely foreign to Sartrean thought.

PM: And yet in Marxism, even in orthodox Marxism, there is, implicitly at any rate, even before Lacan tells us so, a notion of the unconscious.

JK: It's not the same unconscious. I think that what seduced us in Marxism was rather a materialist way of reading Hegel and a concept of negativity. It was and still is a matter of finding the agent, the agent of process, the agent of history, the agent of the unconscious.

So, to summarize, there were some lacunae that had been pointed out in each—Marxism, structuralism, Freudianism—and at the same time, some positive elements which had been brought in by the others. For example, Marxism had undergone a grafting of the theory of structuralism, but structuralism had undergone a grafting of the theory of subjectivity. In structuralism the subject was missing, so the subject was brought in in the form of different technical considerations: in linguistics, for example, the subject of enunciation, the speaking subject in literary texts, etc. There was a sort of exchange that enriched the three disciplines.

PM: In a sense, then, structuralism provided the link between Marxism and Freudianism that had never been accomplished before.

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JK: At the moment we're in the middle of a regression which is present in the form of a return to the religious, a return to a concept of transcendence, a rehabilitation of spiritualism. It's a vast problem which can be interpreted in various ways. It is not uninteresting. There are now in France all sorts of spiritualist movements: pro-Christian, pro-Jewish, pro this and pro that. Here the Sartrean problem returns. I think that there's a religion of reason in Sartrean thought, just as in the new spiritualists there's a religion of transcendence. But both of them obliterate those forms in which the fact of signification is produced, the form in which meaning is produced.

PM: So, from this point of view, a religious notion of transcendence, a fetishizing of reason a la Sartre, are structurally the same.

JK: I think so, and both are regressions with regard to the current of thought which is most acute, most lucid in the twentieth century, and which involves, as well as the discovery of the determining role of language in human life, the whole adventure of contemporary art. There's a blindness in Sartrean thought in that regard which gives it extremely charming ethical and humanistic positions, just as it gives extremely precursive ethical and humanistic positions to all the new spiritualists today, who are often in the foreground of the cultural, ideological battle in Paris.

It would be better to take up again the basic presuppositions, start from the small things, the small notions. I had a professor who bequeathed to me great wisdom in this area: Emile Benveniste, professor of linguistics at the College de France. He used to say to me, "You know, Madame, I concern myself with small things, the verb 'to be,' for example." Well, I think one must have this ambitious modesty, leave the meaning of history, production, leave all that and take up instead the minimal components that constitute the speaking being. The little elements that make me speak, the little elements that make me desire. It's still too difficult to be able to separate them. I mean that it would be necessary to start from a minimalism, to simplify things, and to be satisfied with more rigorous thinking rather than stir up emptiness with grand theories.

PM: So could we say that Lacan and Benveniste together in some sense provided this next step, and that at this point one could situate the beginning of your work?

JK: Exactly. Benveniste's work is important because it sees the ne-

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cessity of introducing the notion of the subject into linguistics. Chomskyan linguistics, even though it recognizes the place of the speaking subject (although in its Cartesian form), has finally stayed very far behind the great semantic and intersubjective field within discourse that Benveniste's perspective has opened up. What Benveniste wanted to found was not a grammar that generates normative sentences in limited situations. He wanted to constitute, and this is what is happening now, a linguistics of discourse. In other words, the object, language, has completely changed. Language is no longer a system of signs as Saussure thought of it; nor is language an object in the sense of a generative grammar, that is, sentences generated by a subject presupposed to be Cartesian.

PM: What is the difference, then, from our traditional assumption of the artist as subject—that it is the artist who speaks in the work?

JK: I think that when you say that the artist speaks in the work, you suppose an entity that exists before the work. Yet we all know artists, and we know that very often their individuality is in total discordance or enormously different from what they've produced. In other words, the work of art, the production, the practice in which they are implicated extends beyond and reshapes subjectivity. There is, on the one hand, a kind of psychological ego, and on the other, there's the subject of a signifying practice. One mustn't imagine that there exists an author in itself, not that there is no relation between the two. I'm convinced that personal experience is very important for the materiality, the formal features, of the work of art, but there's no equivalence between the two. The work of art is a kind of matrix that makes its subject.

PM: In other words, our traditional understanding of modernism as the assertion of the free will of the subject over inherited forms is a misapprehension of what the twentieth century has given us?

JK: Precisely. Even more so because the problem of art in the twentieth century is a continual confrontation with psychosis. It's necessary to see how all the great works of art—one thinks of Mallarmé, of Joyce, of Artaud, to mention only literature—are, to be brief, masterful sublimations of those crises of subjectivity which are known, in another connection, as psychotic crises. That has nothing to do with the freedom of expression of some vague kind of subjectivity which would have been there beforehand. It is, very simply, through the work and the play of signs, a crisis of

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subjectivity which is the basis for all creation, one which takes as its very precondition the possibility of survival. I would even say that signs are what produce a body, that—and the artist knows it well—if he doesn't work, if he doesn't produce his music or his page or his sculpture, he would be, quite simply, ill or not alive. Symbolic production's power to constitute *soma* and to give an identity is completely visible in modern texts. And moreover, all of his experience, literary as well as critical, is preoccupied with this problem.

PM: So there is, then, to your mind, no way of one's role as artist and one's role as political activist ever being entirely coincidental?

JK: I think that the artist, since we were just talking about form which is "content," is never more *engagé* than in his work. To ask an artist to *s'engager* in order to justify himself is an imposture into which many artists fall for reasons I have just mentioned: the work presupposes a lot of solitude and a lot of risks. You need to justify yourself; you need to identify yourself. But you have to know that, and if you know that, you can carry out *engagement* with humor; when you can, you take your distance. If not, *engagement* is the antidote to art. There's nothing more murderous for art than *engagement.* This is not to say that I am for art for art's sake. Art for art's sake is the reverse of *l'art engagé.* It presumes that there is such a thing as pure form, and contents that would be abject. I think, on the contrary, that contents are formal and forms are contents. Again, if you understand modern art as an experience in psychosis, to work with forms is the most radical way to seize the moments of crisis.

PM: So there *is* a political component to artistic activity and it cannot be direct.

JK: It's not direct and it's not immediate, because I think you know that you always ask yourself what the political component is, although that's a very recent question. Why not ask what the moral or religious component of aesthetic activity is? I think it's a more relevant question. Remember Nietzsche's famous distinction between cursory history and monumental history. I think that the artist is in monumental history, and in monumental history, his relationship to history is through what one used to call morality or religion.

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BOOKS

EXPANDING HISTORY

SHRINKING HISTORY: ON FREUD AND THE FAILURE OF PSYCHOHISTORY. By David E. Stannard. Oxford University Press. $12.95.

A critical review of a new historical method could have considerable value as a prod to its adherents, and as an assessment and evaluation for the profession. Unhappily, this book has no such merit. Nor does it have the redeeming virtue of being wrong-headed yet posing valuable questions. It is derivative, redundant, concretely literal, and intellectually perverse. Stannard presumes to forever dispose of the idea of applying psychoanalytic knowledge to historical research. He pursues that enterprise with the ardor of a prep school debater and the stance of a prosecuting attorney, to the detriment of clarity or serious comprehension. He seeks to dismiss psychoanalysis as a theory as well as a therapy, and thereby to discredit its application to history and culture. To do this the author relies on all the old bromides and arguments of clinical efficacy, logical circularity and reductionism.

Stannard sets up a series of straw men, beginning with Freud as an Italian Renaissance scholar. He offers Freud's 1910 essay on Leonardo da Vinci as "a sample of the type of work done by the psychohistorian." He then hectors the piece as if it was the cardinal contemporary example of psychohistory. He relies on the factual errors and mistranslations first pointed out in a classic article by the art historian Meyer Shapiro in 1956. The difference between Shapiro and Stannard in tone and respect for what Freud was doing is striking. Stannard finds that "Freud's reconstruction of Leonardo's early childhood must be discarded as historically worthless and clinically not much better." By contrast, Shapiro's modulated evaluation is that Freud's

> false conclusions do not imply that psychoanalytic theory is wrong; the book on Leonardo, a brilliant *jeu d'esprit,* is no real test of this theory, which here has been faultily applied. Just as a theory of physics would not be disproved by an experiment with incomplete or incorrectly recorded data, so Freud's general account of psychological development and the unconscious process is untouched by the possible misapplications to Leonardo.

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Indeed, the clinical theory Freud invented and illustrated in his essay on Leonardo, which traces the aetiology of homosexuality to the early object relationship of the boy with his mother, is most modern.

Stannard faults Freud as though he should have met the canons of a contemporary scholar of Russian literature for his pieces on Dostoevsky, a Shakespeare scholar for his interpretations of Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Richard III, and King Lear, an Egyptologist when he wrote about Ikhanton, and a Renaissance scholar in his pieces on da Vinci and Michelangelo. Freud was, of course, none of these, and his essays should not be so judged. He was a clinician who addressed problems of culture and used unique human material from himself and his patients. His essay on Dostoevsky is about the psychodynamics of gambling, not a disquisition on Russian literature. The piece on Lady MacBeth is a brilliant exploration of the corrosive psychological workings of guilt. And the essay on da Vinci exposes the aetiology of homosexuality and creativity as Freud conceived it. The essay is not a biography of Leonardo, nor was Freud a Renaissance scholar.

Freud used cultural artifacts as strategy of presentation of insights derived from his couch. Neither Egypt nor the Italian Renaissance, but his consultation room, was the forum where he saw the vicissitudes of the unconscious at work, and it is these dramas of creativity, neurotic conflict, impulse, and inhibition which he chose to treat in a cultural context because the evidence would be available to all who could read. Thus Freud, ever the able rhetorician, short-circuited the objection of the unreliability of case reports for which there can be no controls or replicability. No one knows what went on in Freud's consultation room or in that of any other analyst. And thus it must remain, for reasons of confidentiality and because the presence of an observer influences the transaction. In order to parry this thrust of critics and to make a general case to the world from what he had mastered clinically, Freud drew on the resources of the culture at large, on cases such as Henrik Ibsen's Rebecca West of *Rosmersholm* who plotted, planned, triumphed and destroyed herself, cases which any literate person could follow, identify with, and themselves put to the tests of insight and credibility. This is what Freud was doing in his nonclinical writings, and for this Stannard violently reproaches him.

The carping quality of Stannard's attack is represented when he

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faults Freud for reporting his therapeutic failures. To Stannard this "hardly inspires confidence." A less vituperative critic might see the pedagogic virtue of exposing and examining clinical errors in technique. Therapeutic "successes" are readily reported and are in many ways didactically less valuable than therapeutic failures because of the numerous variables that go into the recovery of emotional health. Failures are more interesting, revealing, and rare in the literature. It is from the errors that we learn. It was an indication of Freud's stature and courage that he used his mistakes to teach and adapted his theory accordingly—a point which escapes Stannard. Freud was able to write a famous postscript to the "Dora" case (1901) in which he discussed his faults of technique, his omissions and errors, above all his failures to see and interpret the central role of the transference, which he was then in the process of discovering. He writes of his perplexity, of what he ought to have done, and what he has learned. For this reason, these cases are today carefully studied by those who wish to learn clinical technique in every psychoanalytic training institute in the world.

Another of Stannard's straw men is that psychoanalysis imposes on the world a highly structured, abstract, present-biased system rather then initiating analysis from within the cultural confines of the world being studied. Stannard writes as though he had personally discovered historical relativism. He reminds us of "the influence of a perceiver's cultural history on his or her perceptions," without acknowledging that this, of course, is precisely the essence of psychoanalytic work. No other humanistic discipline or mode of therapy is so intensely concerned with the nuances of two person's differences of perception of each other and of themselves. What more empathic, humanistic, unique, and individualized modality is there in the therapeutic marketplace today? Whether or not psychoanalysis meets the criteria of a "hard" science is of little moment. It has many of the attributes of the arts and humanities. The question is, can it contribute to an understanding of the richness, complexity, and ambiguity of the personal and collective present and past?

The nature of historical research involves a regression by the scholar akin to the experience of analyst and analysand. The historian immerses himself in the materials of his subject, be they correspondence, diaries, notebooks, memoranda, or state papers. He comes to "know" his subject as he observes day by day decision making, conflict escalation or resolution, dealing with allies and an-

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tagonists. This is what Dilthey termed *"Einfühlen"* and his Anglo-Saxon prophet, R.G. Collingwood, called "getting into the mind of the past." These empathic skills of identification are what historians, knowingly or unknowingly, daily use in their work, and they constitute the art of history. These empathic arts may be refined and conceptualized by the clinical arts of meeting the life problems that people face and their adaptations to them. Each confrontation with the self and the external world is also a meeting with the individual and social past, including its adjustments, aberrations, and legacies of trauma, fear, failure, and success.

Stannard thinks Freud adheres to a Cartesian mind-body dualism. Another, more accurate, way of understanding Freud is to acknowledge that he closed the breach between psyche and soma which has existed since Plato. If Stannard were not so determined to depreciate Freud, he would appreciate that, rather than creating "a mind-body dichotomy," psychoanalysis has integrated more closely than ever the worlds of body and soul. No longer can we see "mind" as higher and "matter" as lower. Freud demonstrated in theory and practice the fine nuances of the interrelationship of mental and physical states. These mutual influences have been conceptualized, explored, and delineated by Freud and his successor psychoanalysts, so that now historians may ask new questions about the coincidences of breakdowns in health and turns of fortunes they see in political figures and groups. Leon Trotsky self-assuredly wrote: "One can foresee a revolution or a war, but it is impossible to foresee the consequences of an autumn shooting-trip for wild ducks." Today's historian may well be more modest than Trotsky in predicting the onset of revolutions or wars, but brings greater insight and precision to bear on the cross-influence of an ambivalent struggle for leadership and physical collapse such as Trotsky suffered when he was engaged in an intense conflict with Stalin for Lenin's mantle.

Much in Stannard's argument is thin and superficial. For example, he accepts Edwin Weinstein's "diagnosis" of President Woodrow Wilson's neurological illness without question, although it is a nonclinical diagnosis questioned by other medical experts, and Weinstein himself has altered his opinion on what troubled Wilson. In 1970 he "diagnosed" a "cerebral vascular occlusion," a stroke. In 1978 Weinstein and co-authors decided it was not a stroke at all but influenza and "probably a virus encephalopathy." Yet it is typical of

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Stannard's haughty tone that he inquisitorially uses such evidence to dismiss Alexander and Juliette George's impressive case that Wilson's childhood conditioned his character. I am reminded of Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, who, when she was told that psychoanalysis is fine as personal therapy but has no proper application to historical personality, replied, "No, it is exactly the contrary—the theory explains so much so well, it is the therapy that leaves unresolved problems."

Stannard's alternative to psychoanalysis as a paradigm for historians is experimental psychology, which has many acknowledged virtues and limitations. More exists in the human spirit, mind, and heart than can be quantified, including wide and complex ranges and nuances of feeling, emotion and sensation. Has anyone yet determined objective measures for the intensity of such basics of human life as boredom, longing, grief, abandonment, forlornness, mourning, passion, love, envy, jealousy, rage, anger, or hatred? These are the province of the psychoanalyst which Freud and his followers have explored and attempted to understand more deeply, systematically, and precisely than ever before. Therefore, the psychoanalytical mode has been the model of choice for many historians who would deal with the stuff of human feelings in the past. Stannard's argument that psychoanalytic logic is circular is unconvincing because if new evidence comes to light or can be marshalled by repeated moves from data to theory and back, or old data is now viewed in a new configuration, then an advance in understanding has taken place and the task of historical analysis has moved forward.

Stannard presumes to tell us that psychoanalysis ignores historical and cultural context. He obscures the fact that psychoanalysis is profoundly *contextual*—that the clinical enterprise of analyst and analysand together exploring the latter's emotional, historical, social, and cultural ambiance and its multiple meanings is the heart of the psychoanalytic process, just as the processes of empathy and identification with the context of the historical person, movement, or event is the heart of the historian's work. For this alone the historian should be open to what the clinical arts can contribute to the comprehension of human affairs. If he has an open mind he will learn many things that Stannard is closed to.

PETER LOEWENBERG

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LES POÈTES MAUDITS

POETS IN THEIR YOUTH: A MEMOIR. By Eileen Simpson. Random House. $5.95.
THE LIFE OF JOHN BERRYMAN. By John Haffenden. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. $22.50.
ROBERT LOWELL: A BIOGRAPHY. By Ian Hamilton. Random House. $19.95.
A MINGLED YARN: THE LIFE OF R. P. BLACKMUR. By Russell Fraser. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. $19.95.

Candid biographies of the recently dead are a relatively new fashion. "What a set!" cried Matthew Arnold when he read about the goings-on of the Shelley circle, and he didn't know the half of it. Berryman, Lowell, and Blackmur, together with others who figure largely in all these biographies (Jarrell, Schwartz, the generous and malicious, astute and silly Allen Tate) constitute something like a set. They all believed with unquestioning fervor in the supreme importance of poetry, but they also believed with equal fervor in the importance of the poet. They expected to have biographers. Lowell told Eileen Simpson of his worry lest he and Berryman should fall into the hands of some "hideously young" biographer who would get them all wrong. Getting them right would obviously entail the representation of the quality Lowell called their "all-outedness," the risks, follies, and wickednesses entailed upon them not only by their madness but by its collaborator, the myth of the *poète maudit* and the faith that went with it, expressed in Berryman's statement that "the artist is extremely lucky who is presented with the worst possible ordeal which will not actually kill him."

The lives of such men cannot be written without the collaboration of survivors, and these survivors are bound to have suffered a good deal; but evidently they also believe that the poets should be got right, so that a prolongation of pain or the memory of it may be compensated for by the accuracy of the portrait. That they should permit, indeed make possible, this matching of the man who suffered and the artist who created suggests new ideas of decorum, for the old hagiography called for exclusions; the new includes all, or nearly all, even the humiliating details that somehow enhance modern heroism.

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Modern travel and publicity put the great men on public show to an extent formerly undreamed of, and many readers of these books will, like me, have known them slightly, and will want to compare their memory sketches with these finished portraits. I met Berryman only once, in the early spring of 1964, when I was staying with Allen Tate in Minneapolis. We visited the poet in the Abbott hospital, the doctor saying we should not stay in his room longer than it took to smoke one cigarette—not the measurement of time most doctors would now use. We stayed for half a pack; the patient was charming and frantically active, signing a great stack of *77 Dream Songs,* talking fast about them, about the seven hundred others that, he said, existed, and the ones he was writing at that very time; discoursing on *The Tempest* (a courtesy to me, he had used my edition) and gossiping with Allen. It was a memorable performance by a generous man, conscious of his role and his duty. On that same day or the next he wrote the Song which said

> his nerves rattled blackly, unsubdued,
> & suffocation called . . .

Blackmur I met on his unhappy visit to England in 1961 and 1962, but in the summer of 1964 I happened to be a near neighbor of his in McCosh Circle at Princeton, spending some emblematic evenings in his house. They have boiled down to one image of unhappiness or disappointment. His vanity (if a failing so innocuous deserves so harsh a name) seemed to have deserted him as death approached. Berryman and Lowell, though often absurdly anxious about their reputations, never seriously doubted their inherent worth and strength. Blackmur's is the saddest of these stories because he almost always did, and especially at the end. He was never mad and never very secure. He is the odd man out in this batch; though he believed the same things, he could not live them.

Lowell and Berryman were of course very aware of their similarities. Lowell wrote of his dead friend,

> . . . really we had the same life,
> the generic one
> our generation offered

And some years earlier, "What queer lives we've had even for poets!

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There seems something generic about it, and determined beyond anything we could do." As Eileen Simpson remarks, "they had their breakdowns and incarcerations, talked to their psychiatrists about their seductive mothers and ineffectual fathers, won the prizes, been in *Life,* put their eyeglasses in a shoe at night so they could find them in the morning." Each desired, as Ian Hamilton put it, to be Champ. "I see Lowell as my peer, no one else," said Berryman; but he would also anxiously ask, "Who's number one?" expecting to hear that he was. Roethke also worried in this way, and none of them seem to have accepted Blake's opinion (echoed by Eliot) that "there is no competition," or Milton's, that fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil. They were very hungry for praise. It seems almost inexplicable that a poet of Lowell's caliber should worry about reviews. When *Life Studies* appeared I said some disparaging things about it, as Hamilton here unkindly remembers. Lowell said nothing, showed me every courtesy, even having me to stay with him in New York. Ten years later Faber published a second edition, this time including the long prose section they had omitted from the first. I took the opportunity to say that I had been wrong the first time, and Lowell wrote to thank me for doing so; my insignificant notice had been in his memory all those years. Of course it shows grandeur of spirit that he should have written such a letter in the midst of a life at once tumultuous and laborious; but that spirit shows through even the most terrible, even through the most hilarious, of his deeds and misdeeds.

At the end of her account of her difficult marriage to Berryman, Eileen Simpson (who has clearly never lost her sense of *his* inherent grandeur) offers a diagnosis of his troubles that is the reverse of the conventional view. Should she blame Berryman's suicide on his being a poet, as Wordsworth did Chatterton's in the poem from which she takes her title? At first she did, but came to see that she had missed the obvious: "It was the poetry that kept him alive." He might have gone the way of his father, a suicide at forty. It was when it seemed to him that there was no more poetry to come that, at fifty-seven, he took his life.

The pathology, and even more the sociopathology, of these poets remain obscure. Their sense of vocation, their heroic absurdities, their illnesses, are correlated with their gifts, but no one has really been able to say how, or how an almost daily beauty in their lives was consistent with their cruelties, their vanities, and their

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power, especially Lowell's, to write lines that spring at one like tigers and for the moment make all questions of discriminating value or rank seem trivial. How do the "hideously young" biographers handle these huge subjects?

Eileen Simpson, of course, is not one of them; hers is a charitable, intimate, civilized memoir of one who loved but finally could no longer bear a man whose dependence on her was mitigated only by his dependence on his mother, on drink, on the numerous, and sometimes vaunted, infidelities. It is a good and intelligent book. Mr. Haffenden tells us more, and from him we get documentation of many horrors. Berryman was a religious man, and would very likely have preferred almost any other kind of life to the kind he had to have, felt he had to have; he rarely spares himself when speaking of his disgrace, and Mr. Haffenden doesn't spare him, either. Berryman would probably have approved, though he could not have admired Haffenden's prose. He had a pedantic side, and cared about purity of prose. Haffenden has a positive gift for the infelicitous. Among the words he misuses are *traduce, oppugned, prevaricate, imponderable, fortuitous, saliently* (sapiently?) and, perhaps the oddest of all, *necessitous* ("his readings were necessitous to his income"). Of Berryman's work with students he says that the poet "exercised a tremendous involvement with all of them," and this awkwardness is characteristic of Haffenden but not of Berryman's students, for the samples of their writing given here are all more accomplished than his own. There is a tradition of careful purity in the prose of *poètes maudits,* and there ought to be one in the prose of their biographers. Still, the book is the product of great industry, of much archival research and many interviews, and it probably won't harm Berryman.

Lowell's life was even more extravagant and altogether more grand. It is not difficult to believe that he found it hard to imagine the right person to chronicle its anguish and achievement, its tragedy and farce. But the right person turned up; Hamilton's is a book of rare quality. This is an efficient record, but it is also very well written, with admirable tact and control of tone. Moreover he is a poet, and understands poetry; not at all inclined to give undiscriminating praise (he can be severe, for example, on some of the Imitations), he has and conveys a sense of the presence of Lowell. The far too frequent manic episodes are set forth with candor—with an understanding of how frightening and exhausting they must have

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been to the poet's intimates, yet unsensationally. Everybody, including the author, comes very well out of this book; it is a model for all such new-style candid biography.

This poet had good friends and understanders, who coped with the weird emergencies and with the opposition of sensible people—policemen, soldiers, academics. They had immense trouble persuading the professors at Cincinnati that behavior they regarded as suitably splendid and poetlike was really the beginning of mania. In Rio, in Salzburg, in New York, and in London, they got him out of trouble and into the hospital. They lived with all his impossible self-contradictions, until too frightened and exhausted to go on; but that rarely happened because of all the feelings he inspired, the deepest was a sort of reverence. Hamilton, a cool writer, makes that intelligible.

Blackmur was a more mother-haunted figure, and also prone to sickness, though his illnesses were physical. Mr. Fraser calls him "our best American critic, a good poet, and a great man," adding expressly that there was hokum mixed in with the greatness, but not minding about that. The claim seems questionable. There is certainly some fine criticism, but there is too often a sort of virtuoso straining for effect, an aesthete's reluctance to "succumb to the platitude of statement." Blackmur's avoidance of statement gives his style a mannered quality, as if the ordinary, in the process of its conversion into epigram, had simply disappeared into a verbal mist.

Fraser knew his subject very well, and it is probably because of that, and out of real admiration and affection, that he himself writes in a somewhat mannered and self-conscious style. I found that this quality in his narrative enhanced the sense that in life as well as in art Blackmur was always trying to be something he wasn't quite. The effect is rather lowering. Fraser has many oddities to chronicle, but none of the disastrous and hilarious episodes that occur so often in the lives of Berryman and Lowell. Blackmur had a sense of his own vocation as a poet, perhaps a great poet, and stands in the same tradition as the others but without their confidence; he was boastful, but never with the sometimes hateful splendor of Lowell or the occasional vulgarity of Berryman. His vanity and pretentiousness have the air of compensations for a feeling of inadequacy, as in his worry about not having a Ph.D. He made, it seems almost consciously, a bad marriage. "It is only parts of men and women that are married," he gloomily observed. For him, as for the others, university teaching

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was always a *pis aller,* but the other two did it better. He said he wanted to learn how to lecture, but the evidence suggests that he never did, though one of his best works, *Anni Mirabiles,* was a lecture series.

Berryman was always comparing himself to other great suffering artists, to Baudelaire and Trakl, Dostoevsky and Handel (he was thought to be epileptic). Blackmur saw himself as a quieter version of Felix Krull, and "always kept before him the example of Gilbert Osmond in James's *Portrait of a Lady*—and how the emotionally stunted man used his intelligence 'predominantly to prevent the full response'." Lincoln Kirstein, who knew him in the good days of *Hound and Horn,* called him a Hawthorne character: "a joyless man, incapable of pleasure, a sexually bedeviled man who didn't like his own body." Others of course found more life in him, but he himself settled for a certain vaingloriousness and, as a writer, what he called "a small crown." It is not Fraser's fault that his book lacks the tragic exhilaration conveyed by Hamilton's. What he does reproduce is that halo of strangeness Blackmur imposed on his language and his life, and we can judge that it never quite fits. It was his attempt, not altogether unrewarded, to perform the duties and enjoy the fate of writers called to be great. As the lives of Berryman and Lowell demonstrate, that fate is not to be sought less than wholeheartedly; it is a call to a ruinous priesthood, supposed to cost not less than everything, and a person might well be as gifted as Blackmur without being at all able or willing to pay that price.

FRANK KERMODE

HOW NEW IS NEW HISTORY?

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. By Lawrence Stone. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. $15.95.

Not long ago, the dominant view of sociology—in the English-speaking world at least—ran as follows. Sociology, it was believed, is, or should aspire to become, a science of society. As a science, its proper business is the discovery of laws of social conduct

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which, like laws in the natural sciences, hold regardless of time or place. Conceived of in such a way, sociology has no particular use for history. Historical materials might provide some of the materials or evidence against which sociological generalizations could be tested. But, by and large, most sociologists who accepted this erstwhile orthodox model of their object had little interest in, or knowledge of, the writings of historians. From their side, many historians were either actively hostile to the pretensions of sociology, or at least saw little relevance in sociological work to their own concerns. These respective but complementary views of sociology and history have by no means disappeared altogether today. However, the general climate of opinion has shifted dramatically within both disciplines. Sociology, in common with the social sciences in general, has been rent by methodological controversies. The outcome of these is still in some degree uncertain, but the result has certainly been to place seriously in question the idea that sociology should be modelled closely on the natural sciences and to open up the possibility of a *rapprochement* with history. At the same time, the study of history has been substantially influenced by the importation of sociological concepts and techniques. The "new history" which Stone has contributed to in substantial fashion in previous works, and which is the object of his concern in the essays collected together in *The Past and the Present,* has been shaped through this encounter between history and the social sciences.

Stone distinguishes various characteristics which separate the "new history" from the genres of historical work that preceded it. Whereas most history was once written in the narrative form, the tendency in recent years has been to proceed in a more analytical vein. The style of historical work, or a good deal of it, has thus changed considerably. Moreover, the "new historians" have been less prone to ask, in the traditional manner, how things happened as they did than to seek to discover why they happened at all. These are changes in method and outlook. Just as important has been a pronounced alteration in the objects of study as such. Historians have moved away from confining themselves to the scrutiny of the activities of small elite groups, the powerful, the wealthy, the creators of high culture; they have concentrated instead upon the hitherto anonymous masses, the common people, and the range of institutions in civil society. France—where history and sociology have long retained a closer contact than elsewhere—has been one of the main points of origin of these developments. There the "new history" is not

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so new at all. But in the past two or three decades, as Stone points out, a dazzling variety of studies of social institutions and practices have been produced by Anglo-Saxon authors. "Anyone who has had the good fortune," he says, "to have lived and worked throughout that time can have nothing but pride in what has been achieved in furthering the understanding of men in past society."

About two-thirds of Stone's book is given over to review articles (mostly originally written for the *New York Review of Books*) which document, as it were, the new history in action. They are clustered about a single overall theme — the nature and origins of modernity in the West. These pieces are of a uniformly high standard: sober, for the most part generous towards the works discussed, but rarely lacking in critical bite. They could well be made obligatory reading for the vast majority of sociologists, who still lack an historical sense. For many sociological writers are inclined to dispense airy generalizations about the pre-industrial world in ignorance of the findings of recent historical work — which often runs quite contrary to those generalizations. Here the "new history" has more than repaid whatever debts it may owe to sociology. Let me mention just two examples from the material Stone discusses. It is still a commonplace of the sociological literature that the advent of industrial capitalism has radically disrupted the secure ways of daily life that existed before. But research into towns and villages of medieval and post-medieval Europe shows quite a different picture to the traditional view of *gemeinschaftlich* stability. The generalized anxiety prevalent among the population may have taken a different form from modern neuroses, but was probably as acute as anything experienced today. For many individuals, and whole communities, day to day life was fraught with insecurities and terrors, deriving from the ubiquity of war and violence, the threat of famines, epidemics, and other disasters. A second example of such anxiety is old age. There are far more elderly people now, as a proportion of the total population, than there used to be. Sociologists often take it for granted that, associated with this, the status of the old has suffered a sharp decline; in previous ages, the elderly typically enjoyed prestige and power which they have now lost. The evidence — although still controversial — indicates differently. The old were probably respected only as long as they controlled property; and those without property often found themselves in circumstances that make the fate of the old in modern society sound positively benign.

Not all the trends in the "new history," Stone points out, have

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been unambiguously fruitful. The mania for quantification characteristic of some areas of the social sciences has proved infectious; some historians have also been afflicted by "this insidiously corrupting mental deformation." Moreover, he adds, it may very well be that the new outlook has become too successful for its own good. There seems to be a revival of an older-style form of narrative history, and this in Stone's view may not be a bad thing. I agree with him, as I do with most of what he has to say in his instructive and eminently readable book. But at this point I would draw the implications rather differently than he does. He writes as though historians should borrow eclectically from the social sciences but maintain their proper distance from them. I think that there is a core of what I would call "social theory"—to do with how human actors are to be conceptualized, their actions understood, and social institutions explained—which is shared in common by history and the totality of the social sciences. Problems of social theory are inevitably bound to be controversial; but historians should be prepared to participate directly in discussion of these problems and to contribute directly to their elucidation. Here history and the social sciences merge in an integral way.

ANTHONY GIDDENS

A BIT OF ESPIONAGE?

AFTER LONG SILENCE. By Michael Straight. W.W. Norton & Company. $17.50.

Like other autobiographical writings centered on questionable political conduct, this book invites the reader to sit in judgment of the integrity of its author. Yet one never knows to what degree such accounts are designed to vindicate unseemly or foolish behavior and to what extent they are exercises in genuine self-revelation. Above all, one never knows what is left unsaid. With all this in mind, I doubt that this book seriously distorts the record, and I am favorably impressed by Straight's efforts at honesty and his willingness to reveal many quite unflattering aspects of his personal-

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ity and past behavior. He certainly goes much further and deeper than, for instance, Corliss Lamont, another upperclass American of similar political affinities who also took the trouble to give us his autobiographical reminiscences. The parallel is all the more tempting, since they both are of roughly the same generation and early in life made a major political-emotional investment in left-wing causes, and the Soviet Union in particular. While Lamont failed to grasp that Soviet repression was more than a transient aberration in the service of a basically good cause—as indicated by his autobiography and other public statements—Straight was able to confront the full range of his political and moral misjudgments.

Straight's story is more than yet another account of how a well-educated, rich Westerner was sucked (or drifted) into the veneration and service of a political system claiming to be socialist. While this book falls into the category of what might be called the sociology (or social psychology) of the politics of being rich, it has certain distinctive elements to it. They include Straight's willingness to provide assistance to a Soviet spy ring which consisted of such celebrities as Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, and Donald McLean. Also unusual is that Straight's involvements remained generally unknown to the Western public (if not intelligence services) until the appearance of this book. At last, Straight's "long silence" proved compatible with an apparently authentic change of heart rather than conducive to a nostalgic rationalization of youthful political errors.

At the same time and contrary to the claims of the dust jacket, this story does not explain, "*perhaps for the first time,* why the communist idea appealed so strongly to the best and brightest of Michael Straight's generation." (My italics.) In fact, many explanations have been around for a long time, and whatever information and insights this book offers, they are not entirely novel. Indeed, "the appeals of communism" for Straight's generation (and others) have been reasonably well established and highly patterned. The least they have to do with is genuine economic disadvantage and deprivation. What they most typically feed on is a diffuse rejection of Western societies and especially their decayed sense of purpose and community, as well as their social inequalities. Such critiques are in turn associated with a resounding ignorance of the proposed (or attempted) alternatives to such evils elsewhere. The most intriguing issue has remained that of differential susceptibility: why some educated and affluent Westerners came to be attracted to the Soviet Union (or to

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China, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua) and others of similar background did not; why for some, such attractions were passing political infatuations and for others lifelong commitments. What particular constellation of personal, social, and political factors accounts for the differences among such individuals?

After Long Silence certainly helps us to better understand why the rich, or the second and third generation rich, become "socially conscious" and subsequently attracted to radical causes and movements. Michael Straight has been a charter member of the American upper classes. His was a life of endless privilege; he had the best of all possible connections leading all the way to the White House. It appears that whenever he needed a job, a phone call to high places (either by him or some of his friends or relatives) was standard procedure. Thus, for example,

> I needed to find a job in America. I began my search by calling my father's old friends—businessmen and bankers, diplomats and retired generals.

Later in life the scenario repeated itself:

> I had finished my two novels in 1962. Good causes were hard to find. The American Civil Liberties Union was well established; trade unionists and blacks no longer felt the need to lean on white liberals; I had done my bit for planned parenthood and women's rights, the preservation of our national parks and the control of handguns; the protection of whales, dolphins and baby seals.
>
> My mother-in-law, a wonderful woman, was convinced that I needed some job to keep me occupied. She enlisted the help of her close friend Senator Paul Douglas. Unknown to me, he set out to secure my appointment to the one area of government that he knew would appeal to me—the arts.

And so Straight was nominated to be the chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, which required an FBI check, which in turn led to his going to the FBI and telling them his full story. It also led to his exposing Anthony Blunt, the far more important British "mole," undetected for decades, who had recruited him to work for the Soviet intelligence while he was an undergraduate at Cambridge, England.

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What, then, were the major ingredients in Straight's background which led to a life divided among the pursuit of politics, public causes, private pleasures, the arts, and a bit of espionage?

Obviously, great wealth and the so-called options, eccentricities, and (initially) unfocused idealism associated with it played an important part. Attendance at an "innovative" English boarding school (founded by his mother and stepfather in 1926)—a forerunner of the failed educational experiments of the 1960s—was also characteristic of the atmosphere in which he grew up. This school was to be "a self-governing democracy"; "There was to be no punishment. . . . There was no head of the school, since authority was regarded as regressive. . . ." On the other hand, to this day, Straight notes, he cannot spell, and the manuscript of this book was corrected by his daughter, "who could scarcely believe that any adult's grammar could be as bad as she found mine to be."

Being rich by birth also made its predictable contribution to a diffuse sense of guilt that has colored the political attitudes of many who were attracted to radical political movements and ideologies. The problem is especially acute when the rich feel guilty and yet are unwilling to part with the source of their guilt:

> I had no right to hold on to that money (that my mother had given to me). Yet I was not prepared to part with it. I cherished the independence that it gave me; I liked to surround myself with beautiful things. I had bought an early Picasso in Paris; I wanted to clasp it to myself before I handed it on to a museum.
>
> . . . By the standards of my fellow students at the London School of Economics, I was unconscionably rich. That placed me at a perpetual disadvantage in dealing with radicals. . . .

On returning from England (after attending Cambridge):

> On the docks in New York, my mother's old retainers were waiting for us. George Owens, Jesse's cousin, handed out twenty dollar bills to speed us through the custom inspection; Matty the chauffeur drove us to Old Westbury. Harry Lee and his younger son, Jimmy, waved to us as we rolled up the gravel driveway. Curly Joe and Red Joe and Little Joe were lined up with the household staff at the front door.

His mother, clearly another major influence, was very much

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what we would today call an "activist." She was also somewhat eccentric in more then one way ("My mother took two slices of brown toast, as she always did. She chewed on them until they were soft and mushy; then she took them out of her mouth and laid them on the sill. The birds gobbled them up.")

The evolution of the young Straight's political attitudes was not unrelated to what we would today call "identity problems." Thus he notes the sadness of his youth and "what I deeply longed for: a sense of belonging to some brotherhood." Political involvements in college, in turn, helped him "to gain some identity in my new surroundings." Moving around also added to such susceptibilities. "If I had been English by birth or American by upbringing, I would have been held in place by the traditional loyalties. But these loyalties were no buttress for me . . . I lacked a sense of self."

These recollections are enriched by the author's knowledge of or acquaintance with many major figures of our times, spanning the worlds of money, politics, arts, fellow traveling, and espionage. They included President and Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt, Thomas E. Dewey, Henry Wallace, Maurice Dobb, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Baldwin, Julian Huxley, Felix Frankfurter, Alger Hiss, and all those writing for *The New Republic* (which, incidentally, was founded and owned for a long time by the Straight family). The political blind spots of many Western intellectuals are also captured in some of the anecdotes. Thus, for instance, in 1949, when the author made "some bitter comment about the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia . . . Hobsbawm (the well-known British historian) said with a knowing smile, 'There are more political prisoners in the United States today than there are in Czechoslovakia.'" Likewise it is morbidly fascinating to read about Straight's lunchtime conversation in 1950 with G. D. H. Cole (the famous British economist) in which the latter averred not only that the Soviet Union was a true socialist country, but also that in a future war he would be on its side against Britain and other Western countries because, as he put it, "I'd rather live in a socialist world than a capitalist world."

While *After Long Silence* is not the last word in the contemporary debate about the links between personality and politics, it is a candid and revealing case study of the relationship between wealth, idealism, and the appeal of left-wing politics.

PAUL HOLLANDER

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MESSAGES FROM ELSEWHERE

THE OXFORD BOOK OF VERSE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION. Chosen and Edited by Charles Tomlinson. Oxford University Press. $12.95.

We think today of translation primarily as a substitute for an original out of linguistic reach. One translator may keep closer to his author than another, one write more stylishly, but all have the same task: to make a foreign text accessible. The verse translator is allowed more liberties than his colleague in prose, but he too must toe the line, and when Lowell used existing poems to write new poems of his own he covered himself by reviving an old term and called his work "imitations." There are solid reasons for this view of the art. A considerable public now exists whose members, literate to the extent that they do read books, are at home in no language except English. A still wider public, that of the monoglot American classroom, has to be provided with those "faithful" versions of the classics old and new which professors trust. Fidelity—to the letter rather than to the form or spirit—seems to be still more imperatively called for by the fact that the communications network has brought whole new areas of literature within potential reach. Faced with the latest poem from Eastern Europe or Africa, we want to know as exactly as we can what the author wrote. The translator is not to intervene by foisting his own grace notes upon the original. So the writ runs.

As the title of Charles Tomlinson's splendid anthology serves to suggest, *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation,* not The Oxford Book of English Verse Translation, the translator can play and has played a different role. Until roughly the middle of the last century, the texts most continually translated were classical (Latin far more than Greek), less often, French and Italian, and the translator could assume that his reader, already in command of the original, wanted not a "faithful rendering" but a recreation in English verse. Liberties that today would be censured as license were accepted, even expected. Ben Jonson, with a famous poem of Catullus in mind, wrote:

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Come my Celia, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours, for ever:
He, at length, our good will sever.
Spend not then his guifts in vaine.
Sunnes, that set, may rise againe:
But if once we loose this light,
'Tis, with us, perpetuall night . . .

Jonson did not have to trouble about readers with no Latin or with critics of the "where is this in the original?" school objecting that lines three through five have no equivalent there. "Refleshing" Catullus, as Tomlinson puts it, he "brings over the very cleanliness of Latin" and Englishes the Roman sonority of *nox est perpetua una dormienda* more convincingly than any literalist can ever hope to do.

For some two hundred and fifty years, from Gavin Douglas's early sixteenth-century *Aeneid* to Samuel Johnson's reworkings of Juvenal, poetic translation of this sort flourished and still constitutes a rich though, as Tomlinson says, "largely forgotten" province of English literature. For whatever reason, English departments seem for the most part to regard translation as no part of their business. The typical translator of these centuries, declining what one of their number called "that servile path . . . Of tracing word by word, and line by line," confidently transformed his originals, particularly his Latin originals, into what often are nearly new English poems. If there is any reservation to be made about this achievement, it is that writers (like their readers) were so much at home in Latin that they scarcely felt it to be a foreign language, hence we miss in their work that shock of the alien which can bring new energies into a culture and open up fresh perspectives. That was only to come in our own century, with Pound. Juvenal, in Dryden's hands, speaks like this:

In Saturn's Reign, at Nature's Early Birth,
There was that Thing call'd Chastity on Earthe . . .
Those first unpolisht Matrons, Big and Bold,
Gave Suck to Infants of Gygantick Mold;
Rough as their Savage Lords who Rang'd the Wood,
And Fat with Akorns Belcht their windy Food.

There is something so massively, truculently English here—an Englishness that goes back to Chaucer and starts to soften

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somewhere between Fielding and Jane Austen—that one half forgets what lies behind Dryden's lines: an altogether different linguistic structure and the very un-English world of Domitian's Rome. Pope's "Imitations of Horace" (strangely omitted by Tomlinson) are no less confidently if more politely domesticated, and the same is true of his *Iliad,* partly no doubt because Pope's Homer is a Homer who has been mediated by Latin poetics and centuries of Latin learning.

As a collection of English poetry, then, a companion to *The Oxford Book of English Verse,* Tomlinson's anthology is greatly to be welcomed. What does it have to tell us about the art and craft of translation? And how far can Tomlinson's strictly enforced criterion, a poem for a poem, still be applied in today's changed situation? Certainly we need close renderings of otherwise inaccessible texts—sometimes for reasons that are more than merely literary. During the Vietnam War, for example, the translation of a Vietnamese poem brought the useful message that "Gooks" fell in love, enjoyed the spring, and lamented their mortality like the rest of our species. We need the close versions, but let them be in prose and not devalue the poetic currency by masquerading as verse. What Eliot once called "the rumor that verse has been liberated" has done more harm to translation than to any other kind of writing, seeming to give free rein to those who would never have faced the hazards of formal composition. Tomlinson's poet translators pose a salutory challenge to much shoddy contemporary work.

And yet ours, it has been claimed, is a great age of verse translation. ("The period from Rossetti to Robert Lowell has been an age of poetic translation rivalling that of the Tudor and Elizabethan masters," George Steiner wrote some years ago.) This, if it is so, and the claim may to some extent be sustained, is strange, given the restrictions now placed on the art. The explanation is likely to lie, partly, in the extension of Western literacy into hitherto unknown areas, and the way once familiar classic texts have become remote and hence capable of being made new, and far more in the fact that a major poet was at hand to take advantage of this situation. Ezra Pound's unique achievement is not that he translated from so many languages (Tomlinson includes work from the Italian, Chinese, Latin, and Greek; he might have added Old English and Provençal), for others have done as much. It is rather that he found so many different voices and styles for his authors, in the process creating what are sometimes almost new languages. Set these lines,

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from Pound's version of the Chinese *Classic Anthology,* beside Dryden's wholesale Englishing of Juvenal:

> High destiny's not borne without its weight
> (equity lives not save by constant probe)
> Be not thy crash as Yin's from skies, foreseen.
> The working of Heaven hath neither sound nor smell,
> Be thy cut form of justice as Wen's was, shall rise
> ten thousand states, thine, and with candour in all.

As we read these masterly verses, we know that we are being transported to a distant time and place. Yet the assurance of the syntax and diction give us the sense of being at home there, as though this alien territory were quite familiar. Just as with Milton and sometimes Jonson we feel the controlling action of a Latin grid just beneath the English words, so here we feel the presence of (unknown) Chinese forms of speech and thought. What Pound has done is to write from within an *alternative* English tradition which he has invented, one to which classical Chinese stood in the same relation as classical Latin stood for so long to our real tradition.

Pound was concerned mainly with ancient texts and his influence is most clearly present in work like Guy Davenport's Archilochus and Sappho, Christopher Logue's Homer and, at moments, Peter Whigham's Catullus. He has left a less obvious mark on the translation of modern poetry, and the challenge of the new—the literary fields that have recently opened up—has not, I think, been met at the same level of accomplishment. Certainly Tomlinson has failed to discover a great deal of first-rate translation of contemporary writing. But there is at least one brilliant exception. In Elaine Feinstein's hands a poem by Marina Tsvetayeva becomes before our startled eyes as convincingly a new poem in English as, thanks to Gregory Rabassa, Cortázar's *Rayuela* became an English novel called *Hopscotch.* Where most people do not have the original, let it be granted, we need the close, self-effacing version. We also need the sort of thing that Feinstein does here, when we can get it.

D. S. CARNE-ROSS

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PROMETHEAN NARCISSISM

AGON: TOWARDS A THEORY OF REVISIONISM. By Harold Bloom.
Oxford University Press. $19.95.
THE BREAKING OF THE VESSELS. By Harold Bloom.
University of Chicago Press. $10.00.

In the last three decades, literary critics have struggled to retain their field as the center of cultural understanding. Criticism has been a hybrid, unstable amalgam since the rise of a mass readership. Not surprisingly, the recent struggle has seen criticism try to strengthen and clarify itself by mergers with other disciplines and subjects. From popular culture to structural linguistics, the nets of literary analysis have been flung far and variously. What has increased the extraordinary complexity of this phenomenon is that everywhere literary criticism searched, it found another discipline equally mired in self-doubt and in the "problematic of language." All the disciplines—philosophy, psychoanalysis, Marxism, social science—felt the crisis of interpretive confidence caused by several factors, chiefly the question of how to ground authority in interpreting texts. In this context, Harold Bloom's work takes on a poignant typicality. Two main but contradictory thrusts unite the books he has published in the last decade: first, he centers literary analysis on the literary canon, rejecting humanistic disciplines such as history as little more than the work of knaves and fools. Second, he borrows much of his authority from Freud, but a literary Freud, a writer and interpreter of texts, not a practitioner of healing. Bloom also has revivified a method (almost an anti-methodology) of analysis long discredited, namely, expressionistic criticism, the spectacle of the critic recording the struggle of a lonely soul among masterpieces. Bloom's polemics obscure his strategy, which borrows interpretive authority from Freudianism while making Freud into a sublime poet in the Romantic tradition. Thus Bloom ends with a self-enclosing sense of literature paradoxically close to the formalism he so actively despises.

In two new books this strategy is extended from psychology to religion. Bloom now offers criticism based on his own religious experience, defining this experience in terms of gnosticism (more of which in a moment). The paradox persists, however, since his cen-

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tral insight—that all poems exist in and cry against their own temporality—actually equates belatedness with fallenness. If the first prophets of the diaspora were belated, looking back to previous authority to define themselves, then there is really no "firstness," no ancient truth on which to ground authority. Everything rests on personal will and persuasiveness, and so Bloom is condemned to contentious struggle with enemies and supporters, despite his hunger to be unique. Bloom contradictorily celebrates his religious vision at the same time that he insists no social arena is necessary or sufficient. The critic *agonistes,* he looks in remote, unimpeachable places for the very authority he claims can come only from the genius of the self.

In *Agon* Bloom employs gnosticism as his framework, and admits gnosis is hard to define and radically unhistorical. Borrowing from Hans Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion,* Bloom wields gnosis as a master term that includes, but is not restricted to, poetic knowledge, Romantic imagination, mystical utterances, and early and late versions of the sublime. With a term so many-sided, one makes many claims. (Note that Bloom redefines gnosis as a form of *literary* experience.) But Bloom's obscurity comes not from ambiguity, since he seldom hesitates or qualifies. First he introduces gnosticism as a historical phenomenon, before he dehistoricizes it and finds a gnosis in Whitman, Stevens, and Ashbery. This gnosticism has a familiar core: "The primary teaching of any gnosis is to deny that human existence is a historical existence." If so, how do gnostics avoid the atemporality that leads to formalism? By struggling against predecessors, thus containing and eradicating them. History is no more than a search for self-knowledge. Bloom mediates between the hollow pieties of enervated liberalism (all poetry is not sweetness and light, but struggle and darkness), and the social values that are entangled in the struggles of history. As he says, somewhat smugly, he delights in deconstructionists calling him a sentimental humanist while academicians call him a deconstructionist. But both groups are partly correct. If the self envelopes all conflict and knowledge, then the critic who interprets the self must be all-knowing. But more important, he must not be bound by any historical or social framework or value, using such values only to dramatize and justify the long, all-encompassing agony of self-definition.

Insisting his view of poetry is pragmatic, Bloom says poetry is useful "for whatever poetic and critical use you can usurp" it to.

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Bloom's use is not any use whatever, but the bringing into action (though largely affective, never social action) of "concepts of being." Bloom here seems to tolerate pluralism, but not really. His concepts are limited and are all versions of belatedness. Whether poetry is a "catastrophe creation, agonistic strife, [or] transference of ambivalence," it always protests against the universal truth of temporality, time's insistence that "it *was*." What poems do in resisting and revising the "it *was*" resembles Eros and Thanatos, but is finally a distinct and equal drive. Bloom claims Freud's two drives are defense reactions and are "indistinguishable from the resistances they supposedly invoke." Poetic will, unlike Freud's negation, negates a negation, and insists on the godliness of the self. (What else would we expect from a being who has no history?) This will is also Emerson's gnosis, the cornerstone of the American religion. Bloom thus mediates between American pragmatism and American idealism.

All of this is the doctrine, or the enabling process, that all strong poems embody. Strong poems appear autochthonous and yet are misread by later poets needing proof of self-generation. (Everything strong is both temporally at strife and self-generated.) Critics know this more clearly than poets, since critics discover the paradox in their textual will-to-power: poetry was there before criticism. And before the poem was, there were prior poems, themselves acts of criticism. Bloom claims great power for critics, a power virtually greater than that of poets. "I mean that I can observe . . . *patterns of forgetting* in a poem." Bloom sees past the poet's influences (his allusions) to his real (real because hidden) struggle. As critic he rewrites the poem as every poet rewrites his precursor poet. Again, in circular logic, though Bloom ostensibly writes prose criticism and not verse poetry, since poetry is criticism and vice versa, Bloom emerges as that which not even he is bold enough to claim directly: our most sublime poet.

What if we take him as we take poets at their highest, as guides to spiritual truth? Bloom writes out of religious experience, though he says explicitly he is content not to convert anyone. Religious in an American way, he is a sect of one. Bloom writes in part about poetry as rhetoric, but his chief paradox is that for all his obsession with the persuasiveness of rhetoric (for where else does power come from?), he claims not to need to persuade others. This inverts the American sublime: I alone escaped to tell you, though I know you won't believe me. (Gnosticism is an inverted religion, an antithetical theodicy.)

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Bloom boasts, "If you don't believe in your reading then don't bother anyone else with it, but if you do, then don't care also whether anyone else agrees . . . or not." Bloom is a Nietzschean *übermensch,* a polemical, imperious reader, and comico-pathetic solipsist. The implicit call, as in Emerson's "Self-Reliance," is that we all become like this, a mass of imperial selves denying other selves: "When you have life in you . . . you shall not see the face of man."

Bloom bases his will-to-power on ever larger proofs until finally he invokes a theology. Yet, an American, he eschews all authority except the self. What follows is a theologizing of the self. This leads to several things, for example, the canonization of Freud, and the claim that Freudianism is now the language in which we conduct our spiritual lives. It also produces ridiculous claims, such as that Milton's *Paradise Lost* "is the most Freudian text ever written." Poetry is not meant to liberate, "but to define, limit, and so defend the self against everything that might destroy it." Poetry's action is greater than poetry's being; the poem is a process, not an object, just as a self is. (Again, gnosticism is a religion of process, not of being.) Bloom's radical Freudianism says the self is a process that constantly wards off its own redefinition, though it is without definite identity. Society and history never enter. Self, poet, and critic: all are self-generated and self-regarding.

With Promethean narcissicism, Bloom's project answers the social moment in America. All is struggle and self-searching, denial of authority and an obsession with it, longing for fulfillment and dread of communal responsibility. How this criticism is valued in the largest terms should be clear; you must take Bloom as you find him, he will be no other. As for how effective he is as a critic, my verdict is mixed. His reading of *Miss Lonelyhearts* is an (unwitting) self-parody, moldy fig academicism, and sterile methodology. The paragraph on page forty-six of *The Breaking of the Vessels* is as badly written as any major critic has published in some time. On Freud and Emerson, Bloom is good indeed: fresh, cogent, even persuasive. On the cultural prospects for Jews in America, Bloom writes intelligently about social issues (though with a tendency to genuine despair). As a practical critic he descends the admirable heights of *The Visionary Company* to the erratic brilliance of *Yeats,* to the murkiness of his book on Wallace Stevens. One last paradox: Bloom insists on the socially transcendent role of literature and criticism, but his own work is less and less about literature, and more and more a reflection of, and a failed corrective to, our social and cultural malaise.

CHARLES MOLESWORTH

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LETTERS

Remembrance of Things Past

To the Editor:

As William James once remarked, people tend to believe anything said which goes uncontested (the basic reason for a free press), and so I feel bound to contest the account given by William Phillips ("Four Portraits," *Partisan Review,* 4, 1983) of my relation to him and *Partisan Review* with respect to Hannah Arendt's book on Eichmann. At this late date, with Philip Rahv dead and unable to make some statement on the matter, William Phillips has come forward with an ingenious defense of his conduct as editor in publishing my article, a defense which happens to be false. He claims that I asked *Partisan Review* to allow me to review Arendt's book on Eichmann and that I also stated that I liked the book. (By the way, if I had said I liked it, this would not have recommended me as reviewer to Philip Rahv, who did not like it.) Moreover, prior to the publication of Arendt's book on Eichmann, I had published in *New Politics* a rather drastic criticism of her book *Between the Past and the Future* in which I characterized her way of thinking as a paradigm case of "pseudo-profundity." Quite naturally, Hannah's friends, especially Dwight MacDonald, who idolized her, violently objected to my review, which they all had read. In fact, it was probably because of this review that Philip Rahv suggested me to William Phillips as reviewer for Arendt's book. I submit that I never solicited the review and never said I liked the book, and when I had read the book, I sent *Partisan Review* the piece which the editors published.

So William Phillips's whole account of the matter is quite false and obviously self-interested. Here is how I would sum up his conduct. He betrayed a close friend by publishing a scathing attack on her book and has now put out a false version of why he did this. I am reminded here of a remark by Gide about one of his characters who, Gide said, had gone from bad to worse: First he killed somebody and then he began to tell lies.

But let's suppose that I am mistaken on one point, that my memory has failed me and that it was I, in fact, who solicited the book for review. Still, nothing should excuse William Phillips, in his own eyes, of course, for having sent it to me, even if I had requested it. For he had certainly seen or heard about the attack on Arendt I had published in *New Politics.* Let me add one further detail. The editing of my piece was done by Elizabeth Stille in her apartment. Her husband Mike was violently opposed to Hannah's book on Eichmann. There were not a few times when William, Elizabeth, Mike, and I discussed my text. The congenial atmosphere of these meetings would hardly have been possible if William had had any thought that my review had been imposed on him by trickery.

And trickery is not my line. I have never before this been reproached by anyone for deceitfulness. On the other hand, I have often been charged with being too forthright, too outspoken, and with having made enemies where I might have found friends, or at the very least, allies.

Lionel Abel
New York, New York

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William Phillips replies:

I am sorry that Lionel Abel thinks I was accusing him of trickery. This was certainly not my intention. It is simply that my recollection differs from his—and I prefer my own. On the other hand, he questions my motives in recalling the circumstances surrounding the publication of his review of Arendt's book on Eichmann.

Lionel says I should have known his views on Arendt, since he had just published some of them in *New Politics*. This is a logical point. However, I had not read that piece. If I had, it would have made no sense to ask him to review the book, as he claims I did, and let myself in for the unpleasant situation and the dilemmas that were bound to follow. It now occurs to me after reading Lionel's letter that it might have been Philip Rahv, who lost no opportunity to knock Hannah Arendt, who urged him to write about her. Anyway, I recall that Lionel phoned me to say he wanted to review the book, and I had the impression he did not dislike it. When his piece came in, I was surprised to find it so totally critical, but I assumed he had changed his opinion of the book. Though I was not happy about the situation, the overriding question was one of editorial ethics, which were more important than anyone's feelings, including my own.

In any event, the incident is not of momentous significance. It was part of the story of my relationship with Hannah Arendt at the time, and I went into it to indicate how small as well as big history can be revised, and not to comment on Lionel Abel's motives or character. Obviously he wrote what he believed—and still believes. But I cannot see how my memory is self-serving—any more than his. If anything, it reveals that I did not always foresee the consequences of editorial decisions.

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